

# A Heart in Turmoil

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[ 0 : 00 ] I, like every child, had a simple and naive view of the adult world. I was around about 10 when I first noticed someone writing out a cheque to pay for something.

And for me as a 10-year-old, a cheque book seemed like a great option. Scribbling on a piece of paper and you could buy whatever you want. I remember asking them, where do you get one of those from and whether or not I could have one of those?

They said, you get it from the bank and no, you can't have one until you're an adult. And I remember thinking, oh, how good it would be to be an adult. They have it so easy.

Here am I having to, you know, scrape together coins, beg from parents in order to buy something small. And an adult whips out a cheque book and you can buy anything in the world with it just by scribbling on a piece of paper.

That is brilliant. Oh, how I long to be an adult. From my perspective, adults seem to be able to do whatever they want whenever they wanted. And I couldn't wait to be one to have all that freedom and all that power at my disposal.

[ 1 : 18 ] Now, as an adult and as a father, I see that naivety and that simplicity in my girls. It is both cute and frustrating. My girls right now are into horses.

I hope they get out of it before they actually want one. But so right now, things like saddle club, DVDs, they've got horse heads on sticks and soft toys and Barbie on horse backs.

And it just goes on and on and on. They've noticed that horses eat grass and that we have grass in our backyard. And so they conclude, why can't we have a horse?

And I've said to them, well, that's just impossible. We cannot have a horse in our backyard. The best you can do is pony rides occasionally, like when we have a church here on some sort of fun afternoon.

And so when we had one recently, the Chinese congregations had three little ponies came in. I got the job of assisting one of my children on the horse pony ride.

[ 2 : 23 ] And I was talking to the person leading the horses who owned the horses. And I said, you wouldn't believe my kids. They think they can own one of these things in their backyard. Well, what's wrong with that?

She said, we had three in our backyard before we had to get a bigger backyard. I'm like, do not tell my children that they can actually have a horse in their backyard. Now, it's a little more difficult for me when their simplicity or the naivety takes me for granted.

Like little concern for breaking toys and here you go, daddy, fix this. Because that's what daddy does. He fixes things. Or I remember the time we pulled into a car park in the shopping centre.

And as I'm hopping out of the car, I heard the back door of the car go bang against a concrete pillar with a little bit of gusto. It was an accident. But I still recall being fairly upset about that incident.

About the careless attitude towards the car. And I said things like, you need to look before you hop out and open the door. You could have dented it. You could have put a big scratch on someone else's car.

[ 3 : 36 ] And my ranting received the reply. Little pat on the leg. Don't worry, daddy. We could just buy another one. And I'm like, with what?

Just get out one of those plastic cards or the checkbook that you've got on your desk. Oh, like father, like daughter. It is easy for us to have a naive, childlike idea of God.

That is, God is the all-powerful and he's the all-loving. And so he should, frankly, just get over when things are not right in the world. He should just get over it.

He should just love everyone. Pretty simple, really. God is love. He is meant to forgive. And so he should just do that. He should just forgive. Anyway, how can he really be hurt by my sin and my rebellion when he knew it was going to happen anyway?

So he can't really be, you know, that deeply hurt. He shouldn't, you know, it's expectations. He knew we were going to fail right from the beginning. And so is he really hurt when we actually do?

[ 4 : 50 ] He just goes, oh, I just knew that was going to happen. It is not too hard to take God for granted and treat him like some sort of an emotionless machine in our simplicity and our naivety as we look upon God as the all-powerful, as all the freedom and resources in the world.

And the danger is that we purge God's love of anything that's uncomfortable and we sanitize it and sentimentalize it to the point where most people nowadays are not surprised if you tell them that God loves them.

Well, of course he loves me. That's his job, isn't it? Besides, why wouldn't he love me? I'm cute and I'm lovable. Or at least I'm certainly more lovable than that other person over there.

So why wouldn't he love me? And this is where in the last couple of weeks, Hosea has been so helpful for us. He helps us to see the problem of our sin from the Father's perspective, from God's perspective.

He sheds light on our understanding of our relationship with him from his perspective so that we don't read things like love and forgiveness from our perspective and push them back up to him and say, this is what God must be like.

[ 6 : 23 ] He has introduced us or shown us what he is like by introducing us to a family that is a miniature of this world.

In Hosea, God is not the emotionless, all-powerful magician, but a broken-hearted husband and father who tears open his chest to reveal to his people what they have done and how they have hurt him.

Hosea 11, which Ken just read out to us, is one of the boldest in the Old Testament, indeed, possibly in the whole Bible, in exposing us to the mind and heart of God in human terms.

Last October, we had a week's holiday visiting my family in Tasmania. And the entertainment one afternoon was, when I was with my parents, was an old-fashioned slideshow, family slideshow, which sets out to reveal the embarrassing moments of your family history, courtesy of my parents.

Noticeably, most of the photos were about the three children. Of particular interest and delight for my girls were the photos of their daddy, all-powerful daddy, fix anything, sitting on a potty.

[ 7 : 50 ] Naked in the shower. Wet patches around the pants. Dressed up as a cowboy.

Asleep in cupboards and weird positions. Covered in grime and food and crying. I've never heard them laugh so much at times.

And it amazed me that my parents, my dad's 75, were remarkably sharp about the details of when and where those photos were taken.

We were asking, where's that? When did that happen? But they knew the details. They were even able to express something of the emotions of what was happening when that photo was taken.

All these years later, 40 odd years later. And that's the picture of Isaiah 11. It starts as if God pulls out the slideshow of his children.

[ 8 : 57 ] He remembers all the details. The first photo is the day of the adoption was finalized in verse 1 there. When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son.

He remembers the joy of picking up his own son, his new son, up into his arms and embracing him and taking him home. I'll never forget the day when I held Isabel for the first time, my first child.

Because she cried for two hours. I'll never forget that moment. And the smile which was on my face. The nurse came in after an hour and a half and said, are you alright, love?

I said, I'm perfect. He remembers the day that his son learned to walk. In verse 3, it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms.

He remembers the pride as his little man pulled himself up on the couch and grabbed his finger and began to walk. He remembers the chuffed look on his face when he took those first three steps into his arms.

[ 10 : 04 ] He remembers the day also when he fell and scraped his knee in his staggering around. In verse 3, it was I who healed them. He remembers the pity and the compassion he felt when he saw the pain in his boy's eyes and he applied a bandage and he brought comfort to him.

He remembers the guidance that he gave. Verse 4, I led them with cords of human kindness. With ties of love, I lift the yoke from their neck. He remembers having to instruct and correct and to guide his son.

But it was done with gentleness and with tenderness and with love and with kindness. He remembers the high chair. He got the photo of the kid with food all over their face in verse 4 where he bent down to feed his son.

He remembers the delight in providing everything that his son needed, the nourishment and the help. God is portrayed here in these early verses as a doting father over the life of his beloved son.

And every photo as he flicks through the album just recalls the moment, what he felt, the love, the passion, the compassion, the devotion to his son.

[ 11 : 20 ] And yet, his heart burns. His heart is broken. Verse 2, but the more I called Israel, the further they went from me.

They sacrificed to the bales and they burned incense to images. Verse 3, but they did not realise it was I who healed them. Their rebellion and sin and cavalier attitude from the son to the father just breaks his heart.

He flicks through the family album, remembering his son and his love for him. And yet, his son is grown up and is wayward. Sin in Hosea is not portrayed as breaking an impersonal moral code or standards or a set of rules.

Sin is intensely personal. It is adultery. It is spurning a loving husband. It is spurning a doting father. It is spurning the love of God.

And we have seen in the last couple of weeks the catalogue of Israel's sin. Chapter 8, verse 14 pretty much sums it up. Israel has forgotten his maker.

[ 12 : 42 ] The broken hearted father is hurt and he is offended and he is angry. His love has been spurned.

In fact, in chapter 9, verse 15, he says that he hated them. That's strong language. And so he pronounces his judgment in chapter 11, verse 5.

Will they not return to Egypt? Remember in verse 1, I called them out of Egypt? Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent?

Swords will flash in their cities. Will destroy the bars of their gates and put an end to their plans. My people are determined to turn from me. Even if they call to the Most High, he will by no means exalt them.

The wayward son is guilty. Descended is pronounced. It is invasion. It is exile. And a burdensome captivity.

[ 13 : 59 ] His son has spurned his love. He is angry. He hates it. And so he's going to throw all of his stuff out of the house.

He's going to cut off the allowance. And cut off contact. But he loves him beyond comprehension.

See the next verse, verse 8. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Abba?

How can I make you like Zeboiim? He's saying, you are my beloved firstborn.

How can I treat you like the other nations, the nations that were, the other cities which were around Sodom and Gomorrah, who got obliterated with Sodom and Gomorrah.

[ 15 : 00 ] Not even mentioned again in world history. How can I treat you like that? I have set my heart upon you. The turmoil in the Father's heart is right there in verse 8.

My heart is changed within me. All my compassion is aroused. My heart recoils. It turns over.

It churns inside of me. It's not that God is confused. It's not that he doesn't know what to do.

Those verses just simply express the emotional intensity of God's love in language. It just helps us to see something of his heart.

He must judge the sin. His holiness demands it. But he cannot abandon his promise to love his son.

[ 16 : 01 ] And so how can the demands of both God's love and his justice be satisfied?

Decision is reached in verse 9. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. It's not that God has all of a sudden changed his mind about his son's sin.

It's not like God all of a sudden agree with Israel. Yeah, you know, you're right. I should get over it. I'm much bigger than this. I should just build a bridge, get over it. You know, I shouldn't take it so seriously.

I should just love you instead. What verse 9 means is he decides not to execute the heat of his anger. He literally holds it back.

He holds back his pent-up anger rather than unleashing it on his rebellious son. God's compassion is aroused and he will turn his anger away from his son and not devastate him.

[ 17 : 14 ] How can he do that? Because verse 9 says he is God. That's how he can do it. And he is not a man.

That's how he does it. That's good. Except at God's beckoning in 722 BC, Assyria came and obliterated Israel.

They destroyed Jerusalem and deported those who weren't killed into the four corners of their empire. The ten tribes of Israel never re-entered world history again.

Did God actually go back on his word? Did his wayward son, after God said this in Hosea 11, you know, so you move on a little bit further, a couple of years down the track.

Did God's son just commit one more sin, which was just the straw that broke the camel's back and goes, right, unleash. Had enough. Did God's anger spill over in frustration?

[ 18 : 35 ] Was love not able to win out in the end? Did God actually turn his back on his promise in Hosea 2? To take a people, not his, and make them his people?

Big questions. Judgment on Israel was not the end. Centuries later, a baby was born in a stable.

And as a boy, he went to Egypt with his parents to escape from King Herod. Matthew chapter 2 tells us, The name of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and he said, Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.

Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. And so he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.

And so was fulfilled what the prophet had said through the prophet. And then here Matthew quotes from Hosea 11 verse 1, Out of Egypt I called my son. Matthew makes the connection with Hosea so that we might see that this infant Jesus as more than just another baby boy, but as the son of the living God.

[ 20 : 05 ] Jesus' identity is made explicit at his baptism in Matthew 3, when a voice from heaven says, This is my son with whom I am well pleased.

I love him. In Hosea 11, Israel was the son of God who disobeyed from the moment that they were brought out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

And here we have the Lord Jesus, the eternal son of God, the true Israelite, the true Israel. He is what Israel should have been.

And Jesus was brought out of Egypt. And when he has grown up, he was cast out, let out into the wilderness, but without sin. He lived the perfect life.

He lived as Israel should have lived. And it would be the obedient, innocent, guiltless, and beloved son of the Father who would willingly, willingly resolve the tension in the heart of God between God's commitment to us and our rebellion against him.

[ 21 : 18 ] The anguish and the horror as God unleashes centuries of held back anger upon his beloved son, the Lord Jesus.

As the Lord Jesus takes our sin upon his shoulders and dies and suffers God's judgment for us.

God resolves the tension of his anger and love within himself on the cross.

The Father said to his beloved son at his baptism, this is my beloved son. I love him. And the son cries out to the father on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The father turns his face away, as we have sung, from his much-loved son and he exiles him to the grave.

[ 22 : 25 ] But it was the love of the father that turned back to him and brought him triumphantly from the grave. And only in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the tension in the heart of God satisfied.

He satisfies it himself. He doesn't look to us to satisfy it. Our rebellion against God is dealt with as Jesus calls out from the cross, it is finally over.

And so the lion that pounced in judgment on God's people in Hosea 5 now roars in Hosea 11 to scare off the captives of God's people and to gather its cubs to himself.

They will follow the Lord. He will roar like a lion. And when he roars, his children will come trembling, no longer taking him for granted, no longer abusing him from the West.

And they will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes, declares the Lord. From every corner of the earth, no matter how deep the depths of sin and depravity, the father is calling people from every aspect into relationship with himself through the Lord Jesus.

[ 23 : 56 ] And he gives us the status of sonship. What news! The Apostle Paul ends Romans 8 proclaiming his absolute confidence in God's future salvation of his people through Jesus.

He stresses that nothing can stop God from fulfilling his promises to eternally save everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus.

He ends Romans 8 with a bold statement of confidence in God's love that nothing can hinder God's love. He says, I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Lord. What a statement! Just imagine that you are sitting in the church in Rome as that letter is being read out from Paul.

You're one of the Jewish Christians sitting in the church and there are tears and there are cheers as the end of chapter 8 is read out. Great joy.

[ 25 : 23 ] It seems like it's a great time to break for the passing of the peace before the rest of Romans is read out, the rest of Paul's letter is read out to us. But instead of greeting your brothers and sisters in Christ, you just sit there.

You're mulling over the words of the first eight chapters of Romans and all that's accomplished in Christ. You're not feeling as triumphant and secure as the rest.

You remember that God had singled out your ancestors Israel as his special people in the Old Testament. And God said that he would love them and promised that he would not destroy them in Hosea 11 and many places throughout the Old Testament.

But he did. Ephraim kept on sinning and Assyria came in 722 BC. Babylon came and destroyed the two tribes of the south in Judah in 586 BC and only a handful returned from exile.

And you hear this great promise that nothing can separate me from God's love in chapter 8 and you start to doubt the reliability of God's word.

[ 26 : 45 ] Can it be true what Paul said at the beginning of chapter 8? Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Can those words be trusted especially when at the end of chapter 7 of Romans He talks about the ongoing struggle of sin in the life of the Christian which is real and it is daily.

God condemned His people for their sin in their past and Paul says in chapter 7 that that's going to be my experience. Is God going to get tired of me?

Is God going to get tired of me? You want to believe what Paul has written about confidence and assurance in Christ but unsure if God can be trusted to keep His promises.

And then your thoughts are interrupted by the reader of the letter starting at the beginning of chapter 9. I speak the truth in Christ I am not lying my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers those of my own race the people of Israel theirs is the adoption of sons theirs is the divine glory the covenants the receiving of the law the temple worship and the promises theirs are the patriarchs and from there is traced the human ancestry of Christ who is God over all forever praised Amen.

It's like Paul's been reading your mind what about them? And then he says it is not as though God's word has failed it is like Paul knows what you're thinking did God forget His promise to Israel?

[ 28 : 40 ] No Did He take His word back from His people? No It is not as though God's word has failed In chapter 9 verses 6 to 13 Paul backs up this statement that the word of God has not failed He says that not all of the nation of Israel were God's chosen people His true people that is what He says is that being a true Israelite was not passed on from ancestry to ancestry through through being born into the family it is through the promise the covenant promises that God made to Abraham right at the very beginning being part of God's family is based on being chosen by God not by my effort or being born into a nation His argument goes on into verses 14 to 18 where Paul says that it has always been God's character to have mercy on whom He wants to have mercy and that God is not answerable to us about the choices that He makes

He is God and I am not forgotten and it's then at the end of Romans 9 as the clincher to Paul's argument that God has not forgotten His word that He quotes from Hosea in chapter 9 verse 25 He says I will call them my people who are not my people and I will call them my loved one who is not my loved one Paul makes the point that God's love for Israel and the world in Jesus is not some new plan it was the plan right back in Hosea before the judgment came God's plan right back then was to love all those to whom He would have mercy both Jew and Gentile He is trustworthy He has never turned His back on His promises because as Hosea 11 verse 9 says

I am God and to make it clear He says I'm not man I'm not like you I am God our assurance of God's love for us in the Lord Jesus is based on His character which is supremely seen in the Lord Jesus on the cross God is not like me God's anger is not one of His intrinsic character traits it is a function of His holiness against the sin of humanity that is God is not part of His character is not that He's angry it's not deep in His heart to be angry it's a function of His holiness which is part of His character against human sin that is

He reacts to human sin in anger that's His response but love is part of His character that is who God is God is love that means that where there is no sin there is no anger and God has dealt with sin in Jesus and where there is no sin there is no anger but there will always be love because that is who God is God's love is part of His perfect character and is not generated by the loveliness of those who receive it get that point really clear God is love and His love towards us is not generated because we are lovely it is generated it is self generating because He is love

He has actually not changed His mind about His promise because God's love does not react to my sin you see if it was up to me this is where I'm different than God revenge or justice or the breaking of ties would be my response to such treatment and that is where God and I are different if I was God I would have long changed my mind I would have redrawn my love and I certainly wouldn't have paid the price of redemption for a faithless people but I'm a man I'm not God a man that is called by my God of love to love as He loves and so

[ 34 : 10 ] I stand here as a man and I stand here as a father and let me tell you I really love my children one of the you message with my kids and you'll experience my wrath ungodly wrath probably one of the really big things that I want for my kids is for them to feel secure in their relationship with me particularly if they're secure they'll be healthy and they'll be balanced I want them to know the security of my love for them but they do not always feel it I still remember the first time I was really angry with one of my children and I could see the fear in their eyes I could see that they were feeling insecure in that moment they weren't confident what would happen at any moment because of my anger

I'm not God they question my love God's love is not like mine because God is love and so I must point my girls to him who ensures that they will be more than conquerors through Christ who loves them and as for me as a man and a father my heart will always be in tension the tension between my constant awareness of my failure and my sin and my flaws and God's declaration that I am free free from sin guiltless because of what Christ has done for me and so I must take myself daily to my heavenly father and be reminded that he loves me with an unchanging love his assessment of Steve

Jeffery is not based on a naive assessment of my love of my character he knows how dark my heart is but he's called me to be his son and he ensures that in the Lord Jesus I will be more than a conqueror let's pray gracious father we thank you for your love for us God you are worthy to receive all glory and honor not only have you created all things you sustain all things but we thank you for the Lord Jesus that through his death and his resurrection he has turned your anger away from us so that we might know your love in all its fullness in him we thank you that he has paid the complete debt of our sin we thank you that he has eternally delivered us from your judgment and so father right now we remember what you've done for us we thank you that what we're going to do right now in the Lord's supper that we have this bread we have this wine and we pray that as we take them that we might remember the cost of your love for us in the Lord

Jesus and we pray father that you would deeply deeply nourish and feed us by your word we pray that the bread and this wine might be a symbol lord of all that you've done for us and may we be deeply assured of your goodness to us in the Lord Jesus and we ask it for your sake amen friends we're going to distribute these elements to you in your seats and we will eat and we will drink together