

## The Extent of God's Love

A lot of time discussing the Minor Prophets is spent focusing on their accusations against Israel. To be sure, there were plenty of accusations to go around for them. As we focus on the message of the Minor Prophets, it might be good to take a step away from the accusations and fix our eyes on God's love for His people—even the ones receiving condemnation throughout the Minor Prophets. After all, from the beginning, God's love for His people has been the backbone of everything He's asked them to do.

Throughout Hosea's prophecy, God's love undergirds everything He relays through the prophet. For example, just after chiding them for their unfaithfulness, God spoke of His faithfulness and goodness toward them (Hosea 3:5). Take a look at the way the book ends. Hosea's prophecy was hard-hitting for Israel, but God ended it with love. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him" (Hosea 14:4). God's anger would only be turned away from them if they would return to Him (Hosea 14:1-3), but His love for them was never-ending.

God's treatment of Israel mirrors His treatment of us. In Romans 8:34-39 we can see how nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ. Well, nothing except ourselves. If we refuse to be faithful, God still loves us freely, but we separate ourselves from His love. In the words of Hosea, if we neglect to "return" to Him once we've departed, we effectively remove ourselves from the love of God. Nothing can do that to you but you. God's love for us is always present, but it's up to us to make sure we receive it openly by our obedience and faithfulness.

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