

THE CALLOUS ON ISRAEL'S HEART IS NOT FINAL — THERE IS TO BE A RESTORATION ROMANS 11:11–16

Introduction

The callous on a man's heart does not have to be final. Every man can repent and turn to Christ and be restored to God. This is the message of this passage. The callous on Israel's heart is not final. There is to be a restoration of Israel. Many in Israel are going to return to God and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

- I. Proof 1: God has counteracted Israel's stumbling over Christ (vv. 11-12).
- II. Proof 2: Paul tried to stir the Jews to be saved (vv. 13-15).
- III. Proof 3: the forefathers, that is, the patriarchs, passed down a heritage of holiness (v. 16).

I. Romans 11:11–12 Israel, Restoration — God, Sovereignty

Proof one is that God has counteracted Israel's stumbling over Christ.

=> Israel has stumbled over Christ (see *Judgement, Stumbling Stone, and Jesus Christ — Name, Title*, Mt. 21:44).

=> Has Israel stumbled that they should fall?

The contrast between stumble and fall is devastating. The idea is that of a permanent and final fall — spiritually. Is Israel's problem with Christ permanent and final? Will Israel never accept God's Son, Jesus Christ, as the true Messiah? Is the spiritual fall of Israel to be forever?

Paul's response is forceful: God forbid! Not at all! Perish the thought! Let it never be! Such a thing is impossible in God's plan for the world. God has overruled Israel's stumble over Christ in three glorious ways.

1. God has opened the door of salvation to the whole world. The Lord's messengers went to Israel first, but Israel did not want to hear that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God Himself. Very few received the gospel. In fact, so many rejected the message that it can be said that Israel, the nation as a whole, has stumbled over Christ. Israel, the Jews...
 - have shut their eyes, lest they should see Christ (v. 8).
 - have closed their ears, lest they should hear Christ (v. 8).
 - have set themselves to bitterly oppose Christ (1 Th. 2:15-16).

God had no other choice but to do the logical thing. The glorious message of His love and of His Son was at stake; therefore, God sent His messengers throughout the

world (the Gentile world) in search of any person who would receive the message of His Son. God did what the Jews had always failed to do; God threw open the door of salvation to the whole world. (See *Israel*, Mt. 21:43.)

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”

Acts 28:27-28 “For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”

Mat 22:8-9 “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’”

Luke 14:21-24 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ ‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

Thought 1. Note two provoking thoughts.

- 1) Think how wonderful it would have been if the Jews had accepted Jesus Christ and had become God’s missionary force to carry the message of Christ to the world! Would the world have been reached by now? It has been two thousand years since Christ came to earth, and the world still has not been reached with the gospel. If the Jews had accepted Christ, would the task now be complete? How many more people would have been saved?
- 2) Think how wonderful it would be if more of us (the Gentiles) would accept Christ! If we would dedicate our lives more sacrificially to carry God’s message of salvation to the world, how many more people would be saved and delivered from death?

Thought 2. Note how God “works for the good of the world.” He took Israel’s rejection of His Son and enriched the world. Why? Because God has determined that His Son Jesus Christ shall have many brothers who will worship and serve Him throughout all eternity. Therefore, if a people rejects the message of His Son, God will work it out to send the message to another people (see Rom. 8:28-29).

2. God stirs the Jews to be restored. God has not forsaken the Jews. The door of salvation is open to them as well as to the Gentiles. The Jews can look at true

Christian believers and see the holiness, love, joy and peace of their lives; and the Jews can be stirred to receive Christ. In fact, this is the very point of the present passage. God sees to it that some Jews are “made envious,” that is, stirred to receive Christ and the glorious life of salvation which He offers.

John 16:7-11 *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me: in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*

Luke 24:47 *“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

Rom 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Gal 3:27-28 *For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

3. God assures the glorious restoration of Israel and rich period for the whole earth. Note the sharp contrast...

- between “falling beyond recovery” and “riches.”
- between “loss” and “riches.”

The word “loss” (hettema) means utter loss, defeat and injury. It means that Israel became impoverished spiritually. Israel was spiritually injured and defeated; the Jewish people lost the blessings of salvation. Now...

- if the spiritual fall of Israel led to the riches of salvation being carried to the world...
- if the spiritual loss of Israel led to the riches of salvation being carried to the Gentiles...

...how much more shall the fullness (the restoration of Israel) bring the blessings of God to earth?

Note the word “fullness” (pleroma), which means completion or that which is filled. The idea is that the day is coming when God's plan and purpose for Israel will be completed and perfectly fulfilled. That day, the day of Israel's restoration, will cause even a greater blessing to spread out across the world.

Thought 1. The spread of the gospel has had an enormous impact upon the world.

- => It has liberated millions from sin and shame.
- => It has saved millions from death and hell.
- => It has assured millions of life eternal with God.
- => It has liberated women and children from slavery.
- => It has proclaimed morality and purity worldwide.
- => It has stirred justice and the enactment of just laws among men.

However, when Israel is restored and large numbers of Jews begin to turn to Christ, then the world will experience unprecedented blessings from the hand of God. God promises such blessings to the world.

The point is clear: God has overruled and is going to continue overruling Israel's stumble and fall over Christ.

- => More and more Gentiles are going to be saved. The uttermost part of the earth is going to hear the gospel.

Mat 24:14 “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

- => More and more Jews are going to be stirred to accept Christ and to be restored to God.
- => A glorious restoration of Israel is going to take place. Jews by the teeming thousands are going to turn to Christ someday out in the future. So many will turn to Christ that it can be said that the nation Israel has been restored. And when that day comes, the whole earth will be greatly blessed, blessed more fully than ever before.

Rom 11:25-26 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.”

Jer 24:7 I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

II. *Romans 11:13–15 Paul's Attempt, Restoration of Israel*

Proof two is Paul's attempt to stir the Jews to be saved. Paul was God's primary minister to the Gentiles in the first century. Paul magnified the ministry and gloried in God's call, and he stressed the fact every chance he could. Why? Paul had two purposes.

1. He wanted to arouse the Jews to envy; that is, he wanted to stir them to look at Christ, and to see what Christ had done for the Gentiles. He wanted to stir men to look at the lives of believers and to see the wonderful change Christ had wrought. Thereby, Paul hoped that some Jews would be saved.
2. Paul wanted to hasten the day for Israel's restoration. He knew there was to be a restoration; therefore, he knew that every time he was able to reach a Jew for Christ,

the callous on Israel's heart would soften a little more. The more he could soften the callous, the sooner the restoration would take place. Note the question of Paul:

Rom 11:15 *For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

a. The *reconciliation* of the world has a twofold meaning. It means...

- that all men, both Jew and Gentile can now be reconciled to God. All men can now have peace with God and possess the peace of God (see *Peace*, Rom. 5:1; *Reconciliation*, Rom 5:10; Jn. 14:27).

Rom 5:10 *For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

2 Cor 5:17-18 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

- that all men, both Jew and Gentile, can now be reconciled to each other (see Eph. 2:13-18).

Eph 2:16 *And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

b. Paul believed strongly in the restoration of Israel. The very fact that he asked the question indicates his belief. He firmly expected Israel to be restored, and he expected their restoration to bring such a great revival to earth that it would be like the world moving to "life from the dead."

c. The phrase "life from the dead" is interpreted several ways.

=> Some say it refers to the resurrection of the dead, to the climax of human history when Jesus Christ shall return to deliver the whole creation from corruption and to rule and reign over the world (see Rom. 8:21). This, of course, would mean that believers are not resurrected until the restoration of the Jews to God.

=> Others say it is merely figurative language. When the Jews are restored, it will be like a resurrection, like gaining life from the dead.

Whatever the interpretation, the restoration of Israel will be a most glorious event, an event so glorious that it will be like a true resurrection. It will lead to a new world, a world of righteousness that will benefit all involved. The scene is that the most glorious blessings will be poured out upon the whole world and everyone in it.

Jer 24:7 *I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.*

***Ezek 37:10** So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet — a vast army.*

***Luke 15:24** 'For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.*

***Rom 8:11** And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

***Eph 1:18** I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*

***Eph 2:4-7** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

***1 Tim 1:14** The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

III. Romans 11:16 A Heritage of Holiness

Proof three is that Israel's forefathers, that is, the patriarchs, passed down a heritage of holiness. This is an extremely important verse in dealing with the restoration of Israel. God gives two pictures to show that Israel can never be totally or finally rejected. Both pictures have to do with the first-fruits.

=> The Jew always dedicated the first fruit of his harvest to God. He gave the first part to God and by giving the first part, the man was saying to God that he was dedicating all of his food to God. It was not necessary to offer every mouthful to God. The offering of the first part sanctified the whole.

=> The second picture is that of a little tree being planted and the sapling being offered to God. Every branch thereafter was looked upon as being sacred to God. It was not necessary to dedicate each branch separately.

What Paul is saying is that the root, the first part, refers to the patriarchs, that is, the fathers of Israel. Israel by merit of their patriarchs, their fathers, holds a very special place in God's heart. The whole nation benefits from the dedicated lives of Abraham and the other godly fathers. The whole nation (masses of them) will be restored and saved, brought back to God because of the godliness of their forefathers and because of God's promise to the forefathers (see v. 25).

Note this: to call Israel a holy nation does not mean that the Jewish people live holy lives in the sight of God. Scripture is not talking about practical, day-to-day holiness.

There have been few Jews — just as there have always been few Gentiles — who have lived holy lives. But Israel was *initially* chosen by God to be His witness upon earth: chosen to be His *federal nation* or His *representative nation* to bear testimony for Him. The first fathers of the nation believed God and lived lives of faith, and a few Jews have continued to follow God down through the generations of every century. God very clearly says that because of the holiness of these few, He cares for the nation as a whole — for the whole lump. What this means is this: because of the holy lives of the few, God looks with favour upon the nation. It does not mean that He saves everyone in the nation; but rather, He blesses the nation, all those who live around the followers of God. Those who live holy lives bring godly blessings upon all who surround them and who succeed from them. Many of Israel will be blessed by God and restored because of the nation's godly patriarchs.

Thought 1. Note the influence of godly parents, forefathers and nations upon children and succeeding generations. It is important for every parent and generation to live godly lives.

Exo 34:6-7 *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”* (see Lev.14:18)

2 Kng 17:15 *They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the Lord had ordered them, “Do not do as they do,” and they did the things the Lord had forbidden them to do.*

Job 21:19 *It is said, ‘God stores up a man’s punishment for his sons.’ Let him repay the man himself, so that he will know it!*

Jer 32:18-19 *You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers’ sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the Lord Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve.*

Lam 5:7 *Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear their punishment.*

Deu 12:30 *And after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, “How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.”*

Mat 23:3 *“So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.”*

Thought 2. Note the influence of godly men upon nations.

Exo 19:6 “‘You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Rom 11:28 *As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs.*

Deu 4:37 *Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength.*

However, we must always remember that the people of a nation can be restored to God only through repentance, only by turning from sin back to God.

Lev 26:40-42 *“But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers — their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies — then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.” ■*