Callousness of the Heart

Commentary for October 15, 2026 — Callousness of the Heart or Callousness of Eyes

Two expressions in the Greek New Testament mean the same thing. This is because closely related Greek words are used, one a noun and the other an adjective. The phrases are: **"callousness of the heart"** and the second is **"callousness of the eyes"** (both in the CLV). Varieties of these are in Mark 3:5, 6:52, 8:17; John 12:40; Romans 11:7, 25; 2 Corinthians 3:14 and Ephesians 4:17. It is important to consider the context of each verse completely.

The Greek noun *poro'o* which means to be "calloused" (a thick covering of skin that is hardened and less sensitive) is used in the New Testament as an idiom or a figure of speech. The other form in Greek is *porosis* which means "the state of callousness." The meanings of "callous" and "callousness" can be found in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and the *Concordant Version* of the Bible. Let us look at these verses as found in the proper manuscript order of the passages.

In each verse ask yourself, who is calloused? In the first instance Jesus heals a man with a withered hand in a synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus is angered and grieved by the reaction of the Pharisees (see Mark 2:24 and 3:6):

> **"And looking about on them with indignation, commiserating the callousness of their hearts, He is saying to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretches it out, and his hand was restored."**
>
> • ***Mark 3:5 CLV***

In the next instance, which occurred after the first miracle of loaves and fishes, Jesus' own disciples were the ones who had the calloused heart. Jesus said to them:

> **"For they do not understand as to the bread, but their heart was caloused."**
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> • ***Mark 6:52 CLV***

In a near identical occurrence in Mark 8, the disciples' hearts were still caloused,

> **"And, knowing it, Jesus is saying to them, 'Why are you reasoning that you have no bread? Not as yet are you apprehending, neither understanding? Still caloused is your heart?'"**
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> • ***Mark 8:17 CLV***

Just after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12–18) Jesus spoke to a crowd of people, performed miracles, then separated Himself from them (John 12:36), John wrote:

> **"Yet, after His having done so many signs in front of them, they believed not in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet, which he said, may be being fulfilled, 'Lord, who believes our tidings? And the arm of the Lord, to whom was it revealed?' Therefore they could not believe, seeing that Isaiah said again that He has blinded their eyes and callouses their heart, lest they may be perceiving with their eyes, and should be apprehending with their heart, and may be turning about, and I shall be healing them. These things Isaiah said, seeing that he perceived His glory, and speaks concerning Him."**
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> • ***John 12:37–41 CLV***

That was a remarkable statement. The hearts of the people were intentionally calloused by God, why? so they would NOT be converted. Remarkable! Note what Paul wrote in Romans

chapter 11. Israel was calloused in their heart, a callousness that came directly from God,

> **7–8 "What then? What Israel is seeking for, this she did not encounter, yet the chosen encountered it. Now the rest were CALLOUSED, even as it is written, God gives them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to be observing, and ears not to be hearing, till this very day.**
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> **19–20 You will be declaring, then, 'Boughs are broken out that I may be grafted in.' Ideally! By unbelief are they broken out, yet you stand in faith. Be not haughty, but fear.**
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> **25 For I am not willing for you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren, lest you may be passing for prudent among yourselves, that CALLOUSNESS, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering."**
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> • ***Romans 11:7–8, 19–20, 25 CLV***

All Israel was calloused, a situation that remained in Paul's day and remains even today,

> **"... and are not even as Moses. He placed a covering over his face, so that the sons of Israel were not to look intently to the consummation** [end] **of that which is being nullified. But their apprehensions were CALLOUSED, for until this very day the same covering is remaining at the reading of the old covenant, not being uncovered, for only in Christ is it being nullified. But till today, if ever the reading of Moses should be reached, a covering is lying on their heart. Yet if ever it should reach a turning back to the Lord, the covering is taken from about it."**
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> • ***2 Corinthians 3:13–16 CLV***

The "covering" (vail in the KJV) and the callousness shall someday end. However, even the nations, the Gentiles have a callousness of the heart.

> **"This, then, I am saying and attesting in the Lord: By no means are you still to be walking according as those of the nations also are walking, in the vanity of their mind, their comprehension being darkened, being estranged from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the CALLOUSNESS of their hearts, who, being past feeling, in greed give themselves up with wantonness to all uncleanness as a vocation."**
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> • ***Ephesians 4:17–19 CLV***

What is going on here? Why does God do this to the disciples of Jesus, the Pharisees, the people of Jerusalem, all of Israel and even to the Gentile nations? Part of the answer is that God created mankind with a heart that was deceitful above all things, and God merely gives mankind what it wants, and then "callouses" their hearts.

> **"The heart is crooked above all things, And it is mortally ill; Who can know it? I am Yahweh Who investigates the heart, Who tests the innermost being, so as to give to each one according to his ways, According to the fruit of his actions."**
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> • ***Jeremiah 17:9–10 CLV***

The other part of the answer is that God callouses the hearts of people for His own purposes to accomplish a particular goal of His choosing, as he says in 4 passages of Romans 11, 2 Corinthians 3 and Ephesians 4. God was and is in charge of the universe and of your heart and my heart. Your heart was once calloused. It is calloused today unless God has changed your heart through the operation of His Holy Spirit. Judge for yourself if that has taken place.

To sum up, God tells us quite a bit. I will leave it to you to read all the contexts and to understand the subtleties and nuances of what, how, and why God acts regarding callousness of the heart in the affairs of His children.

David Sielaff, Revised from 2003
david@askelm.com