

A Coward's Heart

"A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit; on the other hand, a bad tree doesn't produce good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs aren't gathered from thornbushes, or grapes picked from a bramble bush. A good man produces good out of the good storeroom of his heart. An evil man produces evil out of the evil storeroom, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say?" - Luke 6:43-46 HCSB



A great teacher once set a spiritual exercise before five of his best students. "Go out and see what the best path a person should follow is." One by one they reported back.

The first said, "A righteous man should have a good and kindly eye."

The second said, "I believe we should be good friends."

The third man immediately responded, "No, the righteous should be good neighbors."

The fourth mused "I think the righteous should develop the ability to foresee the future consequences of their acts."

The last man approached his teacher and said, "Master I believe that above all else, the righteous must have good hearts."

The wise teacher responded, "In my judgment, this last statement is the true one for in these words, that we should have good hearts, is included all the previous statements."¹

Obviously, character is phenomenally important to our spiritual walk. How can an untruthful person receive teaching from El Emet?² How can those who rebel to their human parents ever submit to El Ch'uwl?³

But more than that, we can determine much about a person's inner, invisible spiritual condition by the fruit they develop. We do not need to chop a tree down and observe its inner core. All we need is to see what kind of fruit it produces, or how little it produces, to be able to make a judgment on its state of health.

It is noteworthy that the Master immediately followed His analogy with the frustrated question, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say?" The relativism of today's "cultural Christianity" is leading many to be so open-minded that their brains are falling out.

The fact that hundreds of leaders who claim to be Christians signed a statement that "so much common ground exists – common ground in some of the fundamentals of faith" between Christianity and Islam⁴ shows either tremendous ignorance of the true nature of the teachings of Islam, or basic wishful thinking. These people are like children who, when faced with a bully, respond with fawning sycophantic drivel in the hopes that the bully won't pick on them.

"Confess me before men," the Master commands. "Confess me (regardless of the cost) and I will confess you before the Father." Will the Church have a good courageous heart, or will it yield to doctrinal cowardliness?

¹ *Ethics of the Fathers* 2:9

² God of Truth; Psalm 31:5-6; Isaiah 65:16

³ God our Parent; Deuteronomy 32:18; Psalm 90:2; Proverbs 26:10; Isaiah 45:10

⁴ www.yale.edu/faith/abou-commonword.htm