

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Aunt Sally's Fruitcake

(Jerry Fite)

A recent sermon illustration apparently caught the attention of a visitor. In showing how easy, but maybe more importantly, how unconsciously people lie, the illustration of “Aunt Sally’s fruitcake” was given. You do not really like fruitcake, but Aunt Sally makes you one every year for the holidays. You always graciously receive the gift, appreciating the good intentions of your aunt. Trying to not hurt feelings, and desiring to make Aunt Sally feel good regarding her efforts, you actually lie saying you like her fruitcake.

Reflecting on the illustration, our visitor asks what one is to do when such untruths are spoken. When made aware of any sin, we are to repent. Simon, after becoming a Christian sinned, and was instructed to “*repent and pray*” (Acts 8:22). Repentance is the change of mind regarding our sin which manifests itself by a change in our conduct. In repentance, we determine not to commit the sin again, as we turn away from it. However, does correcting a lie in this case demand we confess to God our sin, and also tell Aunt Sally we have lied to her?

The inquirer asks, “*Can they resolve not to do that*

again and pray for forgiveness for the lie, or must they hurt Aunt Sally’s feelings and admit to her that while they appreciate her thoughtfulness, they really have not liked the fruitcake and have been lying to her all these years.”

There are sins regarding others that do not directly affect the actions of others. For example, one may hate a person which is a sin (Titus 3:3). The person has done no outward wrong, but may be secretly hated. Since the sin does not affect the actions of the one hated, we could, with godly sorrow, repent of such hatred and change our hearts. The fruits worthy of repentance would be totally up to us to bring forth. We would cease to hate, and our actions of love toward the one formerly hated would continue. Telling the one that they were hated would not help them in improving their life, or be expedient.

Unlike the sin of inward hatred, one’s sin of telling a lie affects the one to whom a lie is told. Aunt Sally will continue to make her fruitcake, thinking it is something you truly enjoy. Are we showing her love by allowing her to believe a lie? God is concerned in the effects of lies upon others (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

The only way she can quit believing a lie is to know the truth. Are we applying the golden rule in doing to others that which we would have others do to us (Matthew 7:12)? Would we like to continue making our hated fruitcake, thinking our loved one likes it? Surely we would rather know the truth than continue to give a gift that is really not liked.

For Aunt Sally to not believe a lie she either must ask the direct question, “*Do you like my fruitcake?*”, or we must tell her the truth. To ask God to forgive us for lying and not tell Aunt Sally the truth will be treating her in a way that we would not like to be treated.

We do not have a specific command or an approved example regarding to what extent we should go in correcting a lie, beyond godly sorrow moving us to repent of our sin, as we confess it to God in prayer and manifest actions worthy of repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11, 1 Jn. 1:9, Acts 8:22, Luke 3:8). However, knowing God wants all to live in the realm of truth and not believe a lie, while demanding that we always apply the golden rule regarding others, we will tell Aunt Sally the truth.