

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 sermon illustration caught the attention of a thoughtful visitor. Noting how easy, but 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 asked what one is to do when such untruths are spoken. When made aware of any sin, we must 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 your 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 could continue. Telling the one that they were hated would not help them in improving their life, nor 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 probably continue to make her fruitcake, thinking it is something you enjoy. Are we manifesting love by allowing her to believe a lie? God is concerned

with 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 which we would have them do to us (Matthew 7:12)? Would we like to continue making our problematic 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.

Godly sorrow should move us to repent of our sin. We must confess our sin unto God in prayer, and follow up with actions worthy of repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11, 1 Jn. 1:9, Acts 8:22, Luke 3:8). We have no other command or approved example to guide us. 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.