

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

January 13, 2021



I told the truth; or did I?

While on my paper route, early one morning, I stopped at a small market and bought a candy bar. My dad was out early that day and happened to drive by the store just as I was coming out. He saw me, but didn't stop. Later that day, around dinner time, he casually mentioned that he saw me at the store. My answer lives in infamy. I said, "I didn't stop at the store." When he repeated that he saw me, I repeated that I didn't stop.

I'll never forget the look on his face. It was a combination of disbelief, frustration, bewilderment and anger. My mom's face registered fear for my life while my little brother's expression was sheer delight. He knew I was knee deep in trouble.

The problem for me was that I did, in fact, stop at the store. So, I was lying... or was I? The truth is, though I was only 12 years old, I had a serious "junior moment" just then; I had completely forgotten that I had stopped at the store. It was a total blank; in my mind it never happened. But it did. I went into the store, bought a candy bar, ate it and then completed my appointed rounds but the incident was a total zero in my mind.

In a bizarre twist of fate, my dad — uncharacteristically — didn't punish me, even though he was clearly upset with me. He must have been leaving soon for a Bible class or something, because my parents never left telling a lie unpunished. He must have had something in store for me later. They took Revelation 21:8 very seriously, "all liars have their place in the lake of fire."

A couple of hours after dinner, I was doing some homework, when I remembered, with fear and trembling, that I had indeed stopped at the store, bought a candy bar, ate it and continued on my paper route that morning. I was in that lake of fire in my mind. What was I going to do? Go up to my dad and say, "By the way you were right..."? Or, "hey dad, I thought about it and, sure enough, I DID stop at the store

this morning." I had no idea how to rectify the situation. Saying "I forgot" sounded like the dopiast excuse ever, especially for a 12 year old. But it was true. I think I confessed to my mom and she was my advocate and I survived that fiasco.

Ironically, if I had just agreed with my dad, it would not have gone any further and I would have been spared a lot of grief. But say I did that — wouldn't that be a lie? I would have said "I did" when I sincerely *thought* that "I didn't" and my motive would have been to escape trouble. A lie is not dependent on whether something is, in fact, true. A lie is saying something that you don't believe is true at the time you say it.

If I say, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," that is a true statement. But if I say it without believing it is true, then I've told a lie — an intentional false statement.

The point is that we can only speak the truth if we know it (and remember it). Just writing that sentence reminds me of how careful I need to be in what I say. It makes me go back and look at the sentence again: "we can only speak the truth if we know the truth." If we don't know something is true, then we need a disclaimer, such as "this is what I remember" or "my opinion is..."

People often just say stuff because it supports their narrative. Getting people to agree with them is their "treasure" but Proverbs 21:6 says, "*The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.*" When we say or imply that something is true, we'd better be sure. Otherwise, it requires a disclaimer.

When dad confronted me with a fact that I didn't believe was true I said, "it didn't happen." I should have said, "I don't remember that, but if you saw me, it must be true." I think it's safe to say that his eyewitness testimony was more proof than my absent-minded 12 year old brain. But, be that as it may, I didn't lie, did I?

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