

## **OIL-BASED LIVING IN A LATEX WORLD**

Ephesians 5:1-12, 14-20; Colossians 1:3-11 NLT

One thing I learned while I was a student at Bible college was the skill of painting houses. Never did I think back then that I would ever return to that town to paint another house. And never did I think that it would be a house owned by my son.

Painting his old house brought back many fond memories of learning the trade from my classmate and mentor, Larry. “Smitty” is what we called him. Among the many memories is that we listened to country music as we painted. Country music lyrics give students of theology a lot of fodder for conversation! A lot of sermon ideas and illustrations were discussed as we painted.

I wasn’t listening to country music while I painted our son’s house. But I did think a lot about spiritual things. You can make spiritual applications as you engage in almost any task or activity. As I prepared the surface for painting it became apparent that shortcuts were taken by the previous painter. It illustrated the way many people approach life . . . and eternity.

This house looked good from the street. A closer look, however, revealed blistering. This was evidence that the paint on the house was latex, water-based paint. It was applied before the modern advancements in latex paints. But it was apparent that the previous painter didn’t prepare the surface or apply the paint properly. The surface may not have been clean. Or the paint may have been applied in direct, hot sunlight. As I peeled away the blistered paint, a third explanation for the blistering became apparent. The previous painter had neglected to apply a primer coat to the bare wood. I concluded that the previous home owner cut corners to get the house sold.

Back in the day we used a lot of oil-based paint. Most of the old houses were painted with oil paint, so that is what we used when giving them a fresh coat of paint.

The first step in the process of painting is to remove all loose paint. That frequently leaves bare wood exposed. I loved using oil paint for several reasons. It doesn’t dry in the brush like latex paint does. So the bristles remain pliable much longer and don’t stick together as badly. Oil paint penetrates the wood, treating it and making it less likely to rot.

Latex paint has become more popular than oil for reasons primarily related to convenience. And, as I already indicated, latex paint has been greatly improved over the last 40 years. Being water-based, it cleans up

with water instead of the petroleum solvents required to clean up after using oil paint. Water doesn't sting broken skin like paint thinner does. It doesn't stink like paint thinner, either. And water is much cheaper!

But a major difference between the two relates to how the paint covers or adheres to the material - specifically wood. Latex paint basically sits on the surface, whereas oil paint penetrates into the wood. Even when the surface has been cleaned and properly primed, latex paint is spread over the surface and does not penetrate into the grain of the wood. Because of this, it is more susceptible to blistering and peeling. To the untrained eye, the painted surface looks good. In the case of our son's house, however, the paint on the surface was hiding the deteriorating wood.

At this point you are probably wondering if my purpose today has been to provide a tutorial on paint and painting. I assure you that is not my purpose. This explanation about painting is merely the background for some spiritual applications.

Our latex world is committed to convenience. And that convenience often involves covering over sin with the quick-drying, latex-stretchy membrane that merely lays on top, hiding the dry, rotting life beneath it. Covering over sin may protect us from exposure, but it does nothing to preserve the soul.

The British people don't use the term "painting." They refer to it as "glossing." That describes the way many people respond to sin. They "gloss over" it. Instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to penetrate and permeate their life, many people are satisfied with the convenience of merely "glossing over" sin. They will cut corners to focus merely on the cosmetics so their "house" looks good from the street. But they won't exercise the discipline that accompanies the total makeover the Holy Spirit wants to perform. They seem to think they can hide the deterioration from divine scrutiny - from the eye of the One who paints the skies.

Many people give only enough attention and time to just getting covered for now, giving no thought to the implications and ramifications. So they focus on being good, doing good and looking good - to men. Appearance and attendance are the priority. They will go through religious motions and engage in spiritual activity. Their pious vocabulary combines with expert rationalization and justification to provide cover for reality.

It was at this point in my thoughts while painting that my mind turned to the history recorded in **1 Sam. 15**. Samuel related to Saul God's command to completely destroy the Amalekites. Saul had obeyed, but only partially. Remember the maxim, "Partial obedience is total disobedience."

He spared Agag and the best of the herds and flocks, explaining that they were to be used to offer sacrifices to God. But God said, **“To obey is better than sacrifice”** (v. 22). Many Christians talk a good game - even offering the sacrifice of praise - yet live in disobedience. Like latex paint, they spread words over their dry and rotting lives in an attempt to stand approved before God.

The genuine Christian is not satisfied with glossing over sin. He wants to live an oil-based life in this latex world. Consider some Scriptures that help us be genuine Christians whose lives have been penetrated by the Spirit of God.

### **Psalm 119:11**

**Your word have I hid / treasured / stored up in my heart.**

Reading the Bible must be more than a disciplined spiritual exercise. We must read for understanding, comprehension and application. Better than reading large portions and lengthy passages for the sake of saying they have been read is to read smaller and shorter segments for the sake of absorbing the teaching and assimilating it into our thinking and behavior. In other words, read not merely to check a box but rather to check your life.

Don't merely read through the Bible, but let the Bible penetrate through you. Let the teaching penetrate into every fiber of your life. Grow beyond the naive approach that tries to cover sin with religious activity and talk. Instead, absorb it, treasure it, hide it and store it up. Then

### **Colossians 3:16**

**Let the word of (message about) Christ richly dwell within you (fill your lives).**

Hiding the word of God in the heart fulfills two essential functions. Like latex paint, it protects. But like oil paint, it has the additional function of preservation.

Home owners and builders use as many “maintenance free” materials as possible. Soffits are covered by aluminum, siding is made of vinyl or cement board, windows are framed with vinyl, roofs are covered with steel, etc. At best, however, it must be acknowledged that these materials merely reduce the amount of upkeep. There really is no material that is maintenance free.

Your spiritual life is not maintenance free, either. Your spiritual house needs constant attention; daily repentance and consecration. If you want the word or teaching of Christ to dwell within you, it requires constant attention and daily maintenance. We need to

### **Ephesians 5:18**

#### **Be (continually) filled with the Spirit (Let the Spirit fill your life CEV)**

This is a command we must continually obey. This filling is not a dramatic experience that occurs once, but rather a daily event that we consciously initiate, recognizing our weakness in the face of temptation. When we become a Christian, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. We receive Him. Fully. Completely. He indwells us. We have Him. But maturing in Christ involves letting the Spirit have more and more of us. This is our daily commission as disciples, to persistently and increasingly submit ourselves to the desire of the Holy Spirit to infiltrate and inhabit every cavity of our being until He has all of us; until He entirely sanctifies us.

Paul's prayer in **1 Thessalonians 5:23** should be our prayer for ourselves and for others.

#### **Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely (make you holy in every way, through and through, completely)**

Like oil paint, the Holy Spirit longs to permeate and treat every fiber of our being, preserving as well as protecting us.

### **Romans 8:10-14**

#### **Put to death the deeds of the flesh.**

Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your flesh urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the spirit you put to death the deeds of your flesh, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. NLT

When the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God gets inside of you, it will get hold of you and transform you. Working through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will convict you of your sin and convince you of your need for salvation. He will convert you into a new creation and fill you. And He will give you power to be like Jesus. Peter assures us with these words:  
**By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a goodly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you**

**to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.**

## **CONCLUSION**

One of these years your ol' house is going to be in disrepair. The paint is going to fade and show signs of weathering. For some, the paint is going to peel or blister. What will be discovered about you - the real you - when the paint is scraped away? What is the condition of your house? Some of the old houses I have painted were in such bad shape that I said it appeared they were held together by caulk and paint. What was needed before paint was the replacement of the wood. The wood that had been covered by latex paint was in such bad shape that it wouldn't do any good to drive a nail into it, much less simply cover it with fresh paint.

Many people need to stop merely applying fresh coats of paint to make them look presentable and respectable. Instead, they should allow the Holy Spirit to permeate their heart and mind so that their lives can be secure, not just held together by appearance.

People apply a fresh coat of paint by resolving to attend meetings of the church more frequently. Or recommitting to a regimented Bible reading plan. But merely reading the words of the Bible and attending church events can be only applying a coat of latex paint that just covers up the real problem - a problem of the heart. The appearance of fresh paint masks the real problem, which is working its destruction below the surface, out of sight and out of mind.

My dear friend, don't be satisfied with mere optics - the superficial and cosmetic. Let the Spirit of God rework you entirely, making of you a new creation. As He does, you will find yourself making spiritual applications from many of life's mundane routines and activities.