

PAINTING APPLES **and the Unvarnished Truth**

Painting the apple a nice pretty red makes the apple useless for nearly every purpose. It no longer is fit to eat, or crush into apple sauce, or squeeze into apple juice. Neither is it fit for the compost pile.

Don't paint the apple.

Now, concerning the "unvarnished truth". Generally speaking the "unvarnished truth" concerning people is not very pretty [if we are ever able to grasp what it is]. Our best attempt at knowing and or speaking the "unvarnished truth" may be unvarnished, but it is seldom if ever "truth".

Truth is a person; He alone knows truth for He is truth.

If we do not arrive at truth by accessing the Spirit of God Who alone knows the thoughts of God and man [1Cor.2:11], we can only develop our perception of "truth" by means of faultily programed and fickle brains which gather, select, and analyze the myriad but incomplete number of possibly pertinent facts. It is clear then, that apart from the One who is truth, our minds are unable to fully grasp the "truth" concerning ourselves or anyone else. As we live our lives as Christians we are often tempted to paint the apple red because the truth concerning ourselves is not very flattering. So we hide the truth with little gobs of paint. Eventually the whole apple is a nice pretty red apple-shaped blob full of dead-men's-bones and slimy worms. This was the state of the scribes and Pharisees who murdered Jesus.

To this day, the church is still filled with similar people who are often in positions of leadership. Jesus could still say, ***"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, [and religious leaders] hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs [shiny red apples] which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness [and slimy worms]. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."*** [Mat 23:27-28] Now, if you think that Pastor John Doe or or Deacon Don Doe should read this, you have missed the point. This is not about either of the Doe Brothers. This is about you and me; let God worry about them! This is an issue we all regularly encounter personally - and that is the "unvarnished truth".

The decision before us is how will we handle that unvarnished truth concerning us ourselves.

Shall we cover ourselves with gobs of paint so that we will look good to God and others or shall we carry that ugly reality to the cross and in humility receive His mercy, His grace, His life, and His truth? Are we willing to be real or... are we so addicted to the praises of men and personal pride that we cover our sins with deceitful gobs of carefully selected paint?

When I see a flaw in my life and cover it several things immediately begin to happen. First, as I thus grieve the Spirit my relationship with God is diminished and cooled a notch so that I don't see or hear so well as spiritual darkness draws closer. Then quite unconsciously and unintentionally, I add a notch to my level of inner deceitfulness, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and pride. At the exact same moment I reduce the level of my humility and compassion and love for God and others. All these things occur without my asking and almost without my

knowledge or permission and little by little the life and light of the Savior is diminishedby very thin coats of paint.

Unfortunately these little paint-jobs – like the beautifully painted apples – make me [and us] almost useless to the King. The tragic truth is that well-painted Christians may cause many of the hungry and needy ones to live with their hunger and neediness rather than being nourishment and life for them. Or, on other occasions as they receive from the painted ones, they may be sickened by the very falseness and pretense that makes them..... err... us look good.

In our effort to "look good" we do not intend to cut off the flow of God's life, love , and power..... but..... if truth be told, painted apples really are not much good. And that's the unvarnished truth.

Does anyone have some extra paint remover that I could use? [I understand that blood works where nothing else even touches it.]

Still all too often as I polish my painted apple I confirm the impression that I can do fairly well without a lot of cleansing, interference [direction], and help [grace] from God. The unvarnished truth is that except for the grace and keeping power of God I would be continually running off the road into death, destruction, and eternal damnation. As a son of that first Adam, I have a propensity toward self-destruction. I really need a very Big God to take care of me. Years ago when the world was a bit more clear about this truth we would sing a song called, "I need The every hour" which, in the chorus, repeatedly stated,

*I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee;
Oh, bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.*

Now that I am older I am more convinced than ever of the truth of these words, but - yes, even now, I still tend to run on ahead without waiting for the God of all grace Whom I need so much. And then [all too soon] I land in a ditch of frustration, confusion, discouragement, and fear.....soI scramble up out of the ditch [so that no one will see me so stupidly stuck again] and paint on my sickly smile and begin to casually polish my apple. Painting and polishing apples is the work of fools. By the mercy and grace of God I am finding a better occupation so I sing.....

*I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;
Every millisecond I need Thee;
Oh, keep me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.*