

The Whole Truth
Valley Center February 2, 2008

Do you know where the word "ballot" comes from? It comes from the Italian word *balotta*, which means "small ball." Long ago, votes were cast by placing either a small white ball for a "yes," or a small black ball for a "no" (hence the phrase to "black ball"). In a few days many people across America will be casting their ballot in the presidential primary elections. So many states will be voting on February 5 that it has acquired the nickname of "Super Tuesday."

I'm going to use this as a springboard to remind you that there's a much bigger "election" taking place, with the consequences being of far greater effect than who will sit in the White House for the next four years. That is the election which concerns eternal life. God has already cast His ballot for you to be saved; the devil has cast his for you to be lost. You have the deciding vote!

Today candidates are doing their best to declare their stance on various issues. This week debates have been aired on television to inform people as to the politicians' thinking. It's important to know what the issues are! You can't make an informed decision on how to vote if you're unacquainted with the issues. You've probably received in the mail an avalanche of literature aimed at acquainting you with what the differences are among those asking for your support.

If you were to reduce the issues in the Big Election down to just a few, what would they be? If you were to shrink the differences between the candidates to just a summary statement, how would that read?

The Bible gives us a picture of the beginning of this great conflict. Before it started, there weren't "two parties." Everything was perfect. God had created an ideal universe in which all ran smoothly. He had created faultless beings to inhabit His perfect

universe, and all enjoyed the friendship and fellowship based on His perfect law of love. Without the sand of selfishness, the gears of relationships interacted without friction. All was peace and harmony.

But then one who was of the highest order of archangels, one who stood next to the very throne of God, one who was a commander of other angels, allowed his thoughts to wander down the forbidden path of self exaltation. God had bestowed high honors on this angel. He was wise; he was beautiful; he was gifted. Slowly, this angel, Lucifer, began to believe that all of these attributes were of his own making; that he was somehow to be credited for his accomplishments. His heart became lifted up and he desired to receive the homage and worship that belonged rightfully only to the great Creator. He became jealous of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, and coveted the glory bestowed upon Him. He became the enemy of God's government.

Like King David's son Absalom, who tried to usurp his father's throne, he began a clever campaign of insinuation against the government of God. At first, he didn't come right out and challenge God's authority and the principles of His righteous kingdom; he was too smart for that. That approach would have offended his angelic companions. Rather, he posed tricky questions, and then repeated the answers he was given when conversing with other angels, making it seem as if he were merely moderating an inquisitive discussion, rather than instigating a rebellion.

Slowly, the tide of discontent began to rise. Angels who had before delighted in the service of their Creator now questioned the wisdom of His counsels. Beings whose chief joy had been in obeying His commands now pondered whether He were interested in their happiness and welfare, or whether their "rights" and "freedoms" were being curtailed. It was a battle of issues; a war of ideology! Was God's way best? Or, was there another way that was superior?

Reigning in the background and not unmindful of the secretive campaign that was being conducted, God allowed these ideas to be discussed. Implanted in the very constitution of His beings was the principle of freedom of choice. Up to this time, throughout the universe all had chosen His system of government. Now that another platform was being introduced, God would allow it. His omnipotence and wisdom would be hedged by His decision to grant His creatures the freedom to choose.

As he toiled in his campaign, Lucifer had been clever to present things in a light tailored to his benefit. Deftly he drew together those matters which he felt favored his side of the question, while ignoring the vast ocean of evidence of God's love and care. This would become his main tool: deception; presenting things in a partial way, ignoring those aspects not advantageous to his objective.

The issues were coming into clear focus: would it be loyalty and obedience to God, or could the time-proven principle of allegiance to the Creator be set aside, each creature being of sufficient wisdom to be able to determine what was right and wrong? Angels made their choices, and about a third of them sided with Satan.

When ejected from heaven, the enemy decided to involve the human race in his hatred of God. The very tactics which worked above he employed in his crusade for the hearts and souls of mankind. He would tell some of the truth, but not all of it. He would mix fact and fallacy. He would be deceptive and artful, masking his true intent. He would use insinuation to imply that God was not really interested in His creature's happiness. He would suggest that *obedience to God was not necessary* and that His warnings against disobedience were not to be taken seriously. He told them God's character of love would never allow Him to destroy those who rebelled against Him.

Of course, we know the sad history of Adam and Eve's fall, and the tragic consequences that took place when they chose to believe a snake that had done nothing for them, rather than the God Who had done everything for them.

Fast forward a few centuries to Genesis 12, where we're told the story about Abraham, and his sojourn to Egypt in time of famine. He persuaded his very beautiful wife Sarah (who was at least 65 at the time) to let it be known that she was his sister, rather than his wife, fearing his life might be at risk, but God intervened and warned Pharaoh not to touch Sarah; she was indeed a married woman. About 25 years later, in Genesis 20, Abraham traveled to Gerar and repeated his request of Sarah. When Abimelech, the king of Gerar learned the truth that Sarah was married, he questioned Abraham about it, who replied, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife." Genesis 20:11, 12.

Analyze this for a brief moment: Abraham told some of the truth, but not all of it. Sarah was his (half) sister: that was true. But he left unsaid the fact that she was his wife. In bold type this account tells us plainly that **a half-truth is a whole lie**. Telling only part of the truth, while allowing an impression to gain hold that is not accurate, is as much a falsification as is telling a direct untruth. In this act of unbelief, Abraham was walking in the path of the great deceiver.

I found it very curious during my days in law school to learn that our legal system has much in common with this perspective. One professor drilled into us the definition of fraud as the "creation of the impression of an untrue fact," which can be done even without words. A fraud takes place when a person intentionally deceives another person and causes that person to suffer a loss. It is the "misrepresentation of a material fact

consisting of a false representation, concealment or non-disclosure," and includes lies and half-truths.

Satan is the master deceiver. Jesus called him the "father of lies." John 8:44. Sometimes he tells outright lies, but more often his deceptions follow the pattern of more subtle strategies. ***His special genius is the half-truth.*** That's how he worked in the Garden of Eden. He told Eve only a partial truth. He told her that by eating the fruit she would become like God knowing good from evil. This was partly true, but what he left unsaid was the misery and woe that would befall them by disobeying God's express command.

This same tactic of presenting partial truths Satan used when tempting Christ in the wilderness. In what Matthew records as the second temptation we're told that, "the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge concerning you," and, "in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone."'" Matthew 4:5, 6. "What's wrong with that?" you might ask. "He quoted from the Bible, didn't he?" Did he quote it accurately?

Jesus had just quoted Scripture in refusing to turn stones into bread. The devil now showed that he can quote Scripture also, when it suits his purpose. But a careful reading of the passage he quoted will show that the devil left a few key words out of the quotation! The whole quotation reads, "For He shall give His angels charge over, ***to keep you in all Your ways.***" Leaving those few words "to keep you in all Your ways," changes the text dramatically. Rather than the promise being a blank check to sanction presumption (can I run out in front of a car and expect Him to save me?), it states that when we walk in *His* ways, we will be granted the blessing of His protection.

In the third temptation, the Bible says that the devil "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world *and their glory.*"

Those last three words are significant. He showed Jesus only the good parts. He *emphasized one part over another so as to skew the picture*. He didn't show Him the ghettos and the garbage pits. His sales pitch was fraudulent, in that it consciously presented only half of the image. What was left out would have demonstrated that his product wasn't a good purchase at all. The ugly effects of sin marred the complete picture, but Satan didn't include those details in his prospectus. A half-truth is a whole lie.

What does this have to do with you and me? Just this: Satan is still energetically pitching his product, even quoting from the Scriptures while doing so. But he *emphasizes one side* of the equation to the elimination of another. He presents only one dimension to the exclusion of another. He tells some of the truth, but not the *whole truth*.

The way God has packaged food is amazing! Sometime let your mind ponder the miracle of the banana, for example, with its protective wrapping, delicious and nutritious contents complete with tools (seeds) for propagation. Taken as a whole, food as it comes naturally contains the necessary ingredients for balanced nutrition. I hold in my hand two bags of rice. They're not the same, although the rice in each started out the same. They are different colors. One is slightly brown, and is called "brown rice," and the other is white, and is called "white rice." What's the difference? The brown rice is in its more natural form, while the white rice has undergone processing that has removed the bran and germ.

Did you know that white rice came about only a century and a half ago, when, in Scotland, the complex processing machinery was invented in 1860? Until that time, everyone had eaten brown rice. Brown rice is harvested, then the outer, non-edible husk is removed by hand-pounding, machine processing, or, as they do in places such as India, putting the rice on the road and letting cars drive over it. But, in addition to removing the outer husk, white rice has undergone further processing to remove the brown

colored bran, and the germ or embryo. This process strips out vital nutrients and nearly all the fiber.

Why do people eat mostly white rice, then? What supposed advantages does white rice have that make it the popular favorite? Tim O'Donnell works for Lundberg Family Farms, a California company specializing in organic rice. He explains that the main reason is shelf life. White rice keeps much longer than brown rice. Besides this, people have come to favor the texture of white rice over brown rice, and cooking it takes less time. White rice is cheaper to produce because all the companies are set up to optimize their production and switching over would be costly.

But white rice had a rough beginning. In 1897 it was discovered to be the cause of beriberi, a potentially deadly disease, because what had been removed resulted in the loss of Vitamin B1. Under government pressure, vitamins were replaced, but in places where the rice is washed before cooked, the enrichment goes down the drain. What can't be replaced by enrichment are the nutrients called phytochemicals, which include the all-important fiber.

What's true in the physical world is often mirrored in the spiritual realm. The carnal nature craves refined food. The whole food product is substituted by something that contains less than the original. Some of it is still there, to be sure, but the entire package, as given by our Creator, has been tampered with; we've engineered *spiritual processed food*, leaving something that is deficient in nutrients. The old adage "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" has a valuable lesson in Bible doctrine.

Jeremiah was a young man called to speak God's words at a critical time. His timid and tender spirit cringed against pronouncing the reproofs, corrections and warnings that God had given him, but he was commissioned, "Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. *Do not diminish a word.*" Jeremiah 26:2, 3. He

was called to give them a wholesome spiritual diet, not one refined by removing the less appealing parts. Spiritual malnutrition would be the result. If he had, he'd be giving them "white" and not "brown" rice.

This is the great malady of today's Christian world. Yes, Scripture is quoted. Yes, the teachings of the Bible are presented; at least some of them. But it's without the balance that would bring spiritual health. Many people want to hear about His love but not about His law; about His redemption but not His requirements. They want to hear about the crown but not cross; about heaven but not holiness; about salvation but not sacrifice; about prosperity but not pilgrimage.

There's an undue emphasis on the forbearing, forgiving nature of God to the exclusion of His justice and holy standards. I well remember a sermon I heard about thirty years ago by one of my favorite speakers, Mervin Maxwell, entitled, "He that said, said also." It was on this very point. What does this concept mean? It means that you can't just take the parts that you like and ignore the others. It's wrong; in fact, it's deceptive to take only those parts of the Bible that suit our fancy and disregard the others. Pastor Maxwell was quoting from the first chapter of James which says, "He Who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.'" James 1:11.

Does the Bible talk about God's love and forgiveness? Absolutely! But, "He that said, said also." It also plainly teaches that we should obey Him. If I emphasize God's love and forgiveness and fail to bring into focus His just requirements, I'm presenting "white rice." If we study only about God's mercy and never grapple with our duty to daily surrender our wills to Him, we're eating processed food. If we want to hear only about Jesus crucified but not our taking our cross, it's an unbalanced spiritual diet. We need the Word without any part of it being diminished. We need unprocessed food. We need the whole truth.

This has to do not only with what we receive, but what we share. God has called us to be His ambassadors, His representatives. In this commission, we have a duty to share His Word faithfully. He calls us to be His witnesses. When a person in court steps up to the stand, he or she takes a vow to "tell the truth, *the whole truth* and nothing but the truth". We are called to give to the world the "whole truth" of God, and diminish not a word. That message contains a wholesome balance between His love and His law. To do otherwise is to "bear false witness," which is a violation of His commandments.

This balance of presentation is perfectly revealed in our Lord's discourses. He forgave, but encouraged to "go and sin no more." He loathed pharisaical hypocrisy, but instructed that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes, we wouldn't be saved. Matthew 5:20. He said "I have come to seek and to save the lost," but He also said "whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:19.

No, we don't gain our salvation through our obedience. That's impossible. "By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified." Romans 3:20. But "He that said, said also." The Bible firmly attests that as followers of Christ "we establish the law." Romans 3:31. Jesus plainly told us that His law (He's speaking specifically of the Ten Commandments) would be in effect "till heaven and earth pass." Matthew 5:17.

However, many pulpits in this land proclaim that obedience to His law is neither necessary nor possible. We see the strange paradox of those who want to preserve the symbolic tokens of the Ten Commandments in public places such as courthouses, many times being the same ones who have labored tirelessly to assert that His Ten Commandment law has been done away with, nailed to the cross, and that we are free of the obligation to obey its sacred precepts. Does that make good sense?

As we come to the close of history, what is the message that God wants proclaimed? It's a *call to obedience* to His commandments. Loyalty to God and His government will be demonstrated by His faithful ones being obedient to His law; not in their own strength, but by His grace.

The book of Revelation highlights this more than once.

At the end of time, the prophet John saw the devil enraged with God's remnant people "who keep the commandments of God." Revelation 12:17.

Just before he saw the glorious cloud in the sky, with Jesus coming back, he is pointed to a group who are called "saints." They are simply identified as those "who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

In the same chapter an angel is seen flying throughout the sky, having (notice the balanced approach) the everlasting gospel, and inviting earth's inhabitants to "worship Him Who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Revelation 14:6, 7. Those words are drawn from one of the commandments, the one which identifies the day of worship established by God, the seventh day, or Saturday. It's the day God said to "Remember," but which the world has forgotten.

Why is this so important? Keep in mind that the devil began his deceptive tactics in the Garden of Eden by suggesting that *strict obedience to God doesn't matter*. "He doesn't really mean what He says," declared Satan. Today he teaches, "As long as you keep one day in seven, that's fine." But what does the Word of God say? Clearly, the commandment doesn't allow for such loose interpretation. We're instructed that, "*The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.*" Exodus 20:10. It doesn't say "a seventh day." It's not left up to us to decide which one; that would be assuming powers not given to mortals. We're simply told "the seventh day" is the one made holy by God. The Ten Commandments are not "multiple choice." The fact that "any one of the seven will do" was **not** the original intent is made clear by

the consistent practice of the Old Testament believers, who were never confused as to which day God had established.

Some one might say, "I'm not going to keep the Sabbath because I don't want to be a legalist." How could "*resting*," which is what the commandment teaches, be construed as "*working* our way to heaven"? Besides, is it "legalism" to refrain from lying, murdering and committing adultery?

"But," someone says, "I'm living under grace and not under the law." I hope we're all living under grace, that is, having the assurance that God's great act of redemption has saved us. Living "under the law" means to be under its condemnation and subscribing to the false theory that I can save myself by my own works. Neither of those concepts is valid. But to be living "under grace," as expressed by Paul, certainly does **not** mean that the Ten Commandments have no place, for he declares them to be "holy, just and good." Romans 7:12. He explains their purpose in saying, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:20.

In other words, if the law has no place at all, then technically I'm not a sinner. "Where there is no law there is no transgression." Romans 4:15. Sin can only be defined by means of the law. "I would not have known covetousness unless the law (the Ten Commandments) had said, 'You shall not covet.'" Romans 7:7. So if the Ten Commandments were nullified, then I'm not a sinner; and if I'm not a sinner, then I don't need salvation. I don't need Jesus.

Christians would recoil from such a statement, yet according to the Scriptures, that is the inevitable conclusion of believing that His Ten Commandment law has no place in our religion. And yet the Bible repeatedly calls attention to our sinful state. There must be a law by which our conduct is judged! James makes it clear that this is the Ten Commandment law. After quoting from the Decalogue he states, "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:12. Paul affirmed, "The law is good if one uses it lawfully." I Timothy 1:8. No, it can't save

us. But when we see ourselves in the “mirror” of the Decalogue, we know we must go to Jesus and be cleansed.

The obedience God finds acceptable is not a rigid, checklist perfunctory obedience. It is not obedience from either hope of reward or dread of hell. It is obedience based on love and not fear. It is obedience that stems from a heart broken by humility, softened by the recognition that there is nothing we can do to earn His favor. It is obedience that comes from a heart that accepts the fact that He has done it all, but yearns to honor Him by doing what He asks. It is the obedience that delights in His requirements, knowing that they are given for our good and that by obeying them we express our loyalty to His government and declare our allegiance to be on the side of Jehovah.

Yes, there are many voices today which say, “You can be a Christian and do as you please,” but these are the “smooth sayings” that the Bible warns us against. These are the teachings gathered by those with “itching ears” which present only part of the truth. Satan’s chief deception will be to lead people into an understanding that they can be God’s followers while trampling on His law. This cannot be. God and His law cannot be divided. They are one and the same. All the adjectives that are used to describe God apply with equal force to His law. Both God and His law are holy, just, good and eternal.

The issues in the Great Election are coming clearly into focus. Satan’s platform stands in opposition to God, His government and His law. Christ’s platform stands for loyalty and allegiance to God’s law. One day all ballots will have been cast and the Great Election will be over. Among those who chose the side of Satan will be many who denied God’s very existence. But there will be a large class who professed to follow God, but were captured by Satan’s delusion that obedience was unnecessary, that it was okay to obey nine but not ten of His commandments. God will then ask the members of this group, “How could I have made it plainer? I came to this planet Myself and with My own finger inscribed My requirements on stone. I promised to ‘write

My laws in your hearts by My Spirit', but you accepted the teachings of the one who has fought against My government from the beginning." Oh, what a sad day that will be when many discover that they have been working with Satan against God!

Let us understand that He is a God of love **and** justice. He has a right to expect His creatures to obey Him and worship Him on the Sabbath of His making. He made us and He saved us. The highest act of worship we can offer is the implicit obedience based on appreciation. The big issue in this eternal campaign boils down to whether we will **choose to accept God as our Ruler, and demonstrate our faith by obedience**. It cannot be expressed more succinctly than by what wise King Solomon said: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13. It's time to choose; it's time to vote!