



# Victory Seekers Update

A news update of Victory Seekers Ministries  
Sept. 2010 Published Quarterly by Walt and Jill Hartwich No. 29

## ONCE SAVED – ALWAYS SAVED NO MATTER WHAT WE DO?

The idea of *once saved, always saved* was introduced and propagated by John Calvin (1509-1564) more than any other leader in the organized Church movement. About 54 years after Calvin's death his followers formulated "The Five Points of Calvinism" to counter the so-called Remonstrance of 1610 which is what's called the five articles of Arminianism.

The "The Five Points of Calvinism" are expressed as T.U.L.I.P.

- T for Total depravity
- U for Unconditional election
- L for Limited atonement
- I for Irresistible grace
- P for Perseverance of the saints

It is not my purpose to detail every point of T.U.L.I.P., nor every point of Arminianism. I'm simply pointing out that there are two very different approaches to the question of free will and what the implications are to us.

Arminianism's five points are:

1. Free will
2. Conditional election
3. Universal atonement
4. Obstructable grace
5. Falling from grace.

(The most unbiased in-depth teachings on both of these, which I have found, are Dave Hunt's book, *What Love Is This?*, George Bryson's, *The Dark Side of Calvinism* and the debate between Hunt and staunch Calvinist, James White entitled "*Debating Calvinism/Five Points, Two Views*".)

The Calvinists were vehemently spreading Augustinian heresies, not only about the church in general, but especially about certain biblical essentials – like the issue of who goes to heaven and who does not. Jacobus Arminius, Latin for Jacob Herman (1569-1609), was a man who didn't adhere to the onslaught of the Calvinists and thus you have Arminianism.

When all the dust is settled it comes down to the fact, that what is called Arminianism correctly puts the blame of those who choose the lake of fire with the individual, because of personal choice in exercising their faith; while what is called Calvinism puts the same blame squarely on God, and claims that this unbiblical, blasphemous view upholds His sovereignty and good pleasure.

The truth is there are always two sides when it comes to our relationship with the Lord God in terms of His promises, His provision and His gifts. One is the fact that from God's side all of the above stand because He will not revoke or recall any blessings. "For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable." (Romans 11:29, Ampl.) The other side is that Scripture clearly teaches that we, the individuals, have a part to play. We have to live up to our part of salvation. Once we've accepted this free gift of pardon, paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ, we must work out our own salvation. (Philippians 2:12) The Amplified Bible says it this way:

**"Therefore my dear ones as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show], in my presence but much more because I am absent, work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ.)"**

Notice the Scripture says work **out**, not work **for**. I want to make it clear; **salvation is totally free**, to be had by anyone willing to humbly accept it. The accepting cannot be accomplished by anyone, but us. God Himself can't even accept it for us. Salvation is authored and offered by God, while accepting and making it individually ours is clearly up to the individual when he/she believes the gospel of the Savior.

Consider this commentary,

***"It is very clear that the Lord has acted "for" and "in" those who are in "Christ." But it is equally clear that those "in Christ" must act: they must continue; they must bear fruit. Their action, the writer shows, is just as essential as God's action in bringing them to Himself and putting them in Christ. If a teacher minimizes either of these two aspects - God's action or the believers' response - he has departed from the NT."***

(Commentary on Romans 11:22, The N. T. and Wycliff Bible Commentary, Parallel Ed. P.566)

Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul tells the church in **Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."**

The subject in this portion of Scripture is salvation, not faith, as some erroneously teach. When such wrong assumptions are made, what follows must then be in line with the assumption. Thus we get "saving faith". This says that man is not capable of even believing by himself and that God has to do that for him. The problem with that is that there are plenty of Scriptures which argue against such notion. The believing always comes first! (I Corinthians 15:1, 2; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8; Acts 16:31; I Timothy 1:16; Luke 8:12; Mark 16:16)

**Inability to cause our own salvation is not also inability to accept that which is given free of charge by God who continually puts before us, "choose you this day which god you will serve."** (Joshua 24:15)

Again, the above mentioned notion of not having free will is from a Calvinistic point of view demanding that man is so depraved that he cannot even choose; although free will is clearly taught all over Scripture. Moreover, this free will has to be applied in any and all circumstances.

For example, few would argue that we can choose what we eat, where we go, what we believe, etc., but then suddenly we're told that we can't choose to change our beliefs. If there is freedom, then it is freedom all the way.

If we have to choose, according to God's own Word, then we have to continue to choose to the end. To say that changing our position isn't possible is to say that we no longer are free to continue or to break it off. Again, it is a two-way street with God supplying the free gift of salvation and man supplying the acceptance of that free gift.

The Greek for gospel is *evangelio* and it not only means salvation, but also staying saved, especially under adversity, this is where many can give in to recanting their belief.

This gift can, in my opinion, never "be lost", (as in, I can't find it) nor will it be withdrawn by God, as we have also already mentioned, but it seems clear that the power to throw it away exists for every truly, born-again person. (More about that later)

Notice, too, that we should not only work it out, but do it with **fear and trembling**. The stipulations of **Philippians 2:12** are crystal clear. If I were to accept a gift from someone, do I not have the right to do with it as I please? So Paul is saying in Philippians that this is how we are to treat and thus accept this precious gift.

In today's church especially, we have gone from "God's gonna knock you in the head with a hammer" to "God loves you and no matter what you do, He'll always save you." The truth is we're saved by grace through faith, not grace alone. Grace by itself, without an object to receive it and thus respond to it won't have a purpose. **Psalm 111:10** says, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.**" **If we don't fear God, we won't revere God.** The Bible admonishes us everywhere to not fear man or whatever circumstances might be, but we're always to fear Him who cannot only kill the body, but is also able to destroy in hell. (**Matthew 10:28**) **Biblical fear of God is very real.** The so-called reverence many espouse to have for God is more like a make-believe respect/fear type of combo. **Hebrews 10:31** tells us: "**It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**" The word fearful used is phebomai from the root word phoberos and it means – exceedingly fear, terror, etc. formidable, frightful.

There are those who want to apply the mercy and thus grace of God to any and all situations, no matter what. We can see by the above verse, that this is not acceptable. Verse 28 says that those who willfully sinned against Moses would die, **without mercy**. One could argue, is mercy something God didn't have back then? Or, did God withhold it, because He was mad? The truth is mercy is part of God's character; it is never apart from Him. "**I am the Lord, I change not.**" (**Malachi 3:16**)

Dave Hunt aptly points out that, "**...not showing mercy at all could be explained as resulting from justice; but not showing mercy to all when all are equally guilty is a perversion of justice. Mercy can only be shown to the guilty on a righteous basis; and if not, then justice has been perverted.**" (*What Love Is This?* P.115)

The answer of course is that mercy and grace have no part in the scenario of verse 29. Grace and its power can only be realized when accepted and one is humbled by it. **By willfully sinning, one willfully lays aside mercy and grace; they no longer have any power to intercede.**

If this were not so, then everyone would truly be saved no matter what, which is a secular humanist point of view as expressed by Universalism.

However, there is good news for the one who is willing to admit to his deception and repent. This person, by repenting, **immediately** puts mercy and grace back into operation in his personal life.

**Hebrews 10:23-25** admonishes us: “**Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;**” [faithful to uphold His part in all this, that is] “**and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**” (RSV)

Why are we supposed to do all this? We do this to help us **stay** in faith, follow the truth, and therefore, not give in to deception. In **verses 26-31** we get the picture of what could happen if we don't hold fast our confession and if we don't exhort one another as we see the day approaching, and if we treat this whole thing lightly, we could fall into sin without repentance which is what deception is designed to do.

**Hebrews 6:4-6** is crystal clear in its teaching concerning those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit. **Geuo; a primary verb; to taste; by implication to eat; fig. to experience (good or ill):-eat, taste. Strong's #1089.** This is the same word used in **Hebrews 2:9** where Jesus tasted death for us all. Talking about the same Greek word Vines Expository Dictionary states that:

...“**metaphorically, of Christ's tasting death, implying His Personal experience in voluntarily undergoing death**”.

If the “tasted” of **Hebrews 6:4-6** for the referenced individuals was not really all the way, as some claim, then Christ's tasting of death wasn't all the way either since the same word was used by the writer of Hebrews. Obviously, the writer describes a real born-again believer in chapter 6 of Hebrews as well as a real tasting of death experienced by Jesus. Another proof of the validity of those described being actually saved is the fact that they are partakers of the Holy Spirit, something impossible for those in the world to receive according to **John 14:17**. The rest of the descriptions in **6:4-6** are true only of real believers.

If it is understood that we're talking about a real believer, the argument by once saved-always saved proponents goes like this: “they'll only lose their rewards not their salvation.” This assumption can only be made when a filter has been placed over otherwise clear teaching. Once a web is spun more and more strands are needed to sustain the belief.

The issue, however, is that this person who clearly was able to throw it away by his/her own volition, does so at the peril of his/her salvation. The reason is simple; they no longer are able to repent.

**Hebrews 6:4-6** reads: “**For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.**”

We already talked about the word tasted. What about “enlightened?” The word in Greek is *Hapax photisthentas* and it means ONCE FOR ALL ENLIGHTENED. Tasted, by the way, can also read; “come to know” in newer lexicons. Partakers, from *metochous*, mean real sharers. These people were partakers of the Holy Ghost, something that John 14:17 claims the world cannot receive.

The people the writer was referring to were true born-again believers who, unfortunately, let their guard down and allowed deception to enter, leading them, to not being able to repent. Un-forgiven sin contaminates salvation, if we don’t forgive, neither will the Father forgive our sins. No repentance means there is no forgiveness of that which needs repented.

The bottom line is that human free will has to be actively engaged to receive the free gift of salvation. Evangelion is the Greek expression for gospel [good news]. This good news must be believed to be saved. When a person decides, because of self deception, to no longer believe that about the gospel, he/she has “fallen from grace”. (Galatians 5:4) **In order to “fall from grace” one had to have had it at one time.** The world sees “falling from grace” as falling into sin, but the Bible tells us that falling from grace means that an individual has decided to believe that he/she can save themselves apart from the gospel. Paul understood that real believers can depart or turn away from Him that is God, who called them in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel. (Galatians 1:6)

Chapter 4 of Galatians tells us how Paul was in labor for them – the real Christians – because they were deceived into working for their salvation instead of just receiving the grace by faith. **Habakkuk 2:4** says: “**The just shall live by faith**” and it is all over Galatians as well. **This is an ongoing faith, right to the end.** In Galatians 4:9 Paul states that “**after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?**” This proves that it is possible to “turn again” from the truth.

**Galatians 4:11** reveals, that Paul was afraid for them lest he labored for them in vain. I can’t believe that he feared them just losing their rewards and Scripture of course doesn’t say so. ***The fact is Paul labored to keep them saved, not rich in rewards.***

**Hebrews 12:25** again tells us: “**See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.**” Notice the “we” in the writer’s warning. He’s including himself and all real believers.

Warnings like this are found throughout the Scriptures and their subjects cannot be ignored or just labeled rewards. Even so, some otherwise good commentators like William McDonald have made absurd statements like when the Bible says “**Those who endure to the end will be saved**” **Matthew 10:22; 24:13** really means “those who are saved endure to the end.” (Talk about flipping it around to suit your own *once saved - always saved* presupposition.)

It is true that the **ability** to believe is from God alone, but the **responsibility** to believe is ours alone.

Norman Geisler points out that, “technically, free will is not the efficient cause of a free act; free will is simply the power through which the agent performs the free act. The efficient cause of the free act is really the free agent, not the free will. Free will is simply the power by which the free agent acts. ...So it is not the power of free choice which causes a free act, but the person who has this power.” (quoted in *The Dark Side Of Calvinism*; George Bryson p. 324)

To sum up: The power or ability to first choose salvation is entirely given to us by God. **Romans 11:22** tells us, “**Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shall be cut off.**” – The “if” is in the Greek 3<sup>rd</sup> class condition (maybe you will - maybe you won't.)

The Wycliff Commentary covers it well when it states:

**“22. Therefore.** *The writer is concluding his extended metaphor of the root and the branches. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God. On the one hand, to those who fell, severity; but to you (sing.) the goodness of God, if you (sing.) continue in the sphere of (God's) goodness; for otherwise, (if you do not continue in the sphere of God's goodness) you (sing.) also will be cut off.* Paul urges the individual Gentile to continue in the goodness of God. This of course involves his continuing in the faith (v. 20), but Paul stresses that God provides for those who trust or believe in Him. Hence **to continue in God's goodness** expressed this very well. This goodness will be the portion of the Gentile if he **continues**, persists, perseveres (see Arndt epimeno, 2., p.296) in that goodness. Then comes a causal clause that involves contrast, **otherwise** (eipei, see Arndt, 2. P. 283. With ellipsis **for** [if it were different], **for otherwise**, Rom. 3:6; 11:6, 22 etc.) As in the other contexts in Romans where this word **otherwise** (Gr. epei) appears, the reader, to get the meaning must reverse the preceding thought and then draw the conclusion. Thus it would read, “Otherwise if you (sing.) do not continue in the sphere of God's goodness, you (sing.) **also will be cut off.**” These solemn words of the apostle remind us of the words of Jesus: “every branch in me not bearing fruit, he cuts it out” (Jn15:2a); *If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as the branch*” (Jn15:6a) To make sure this will be an effective warning, the Greek construction shows that Paul does not state whether or not the individual will continue: **If you (sing.) continue in God's goodness, God's goodness will be your portion**”. (The New Testament and Wycliff Bible Commentary Parallel Ed. pp. 565, 566)

As with all our teachings I hope that all who read this will be Bereans and actually dig deep to make sure they know what they believe and what they don't believe about this important subject. It is not wise to just agree/disagree with anyone's commentary or teaching, including yours truly.

\* \* \*

Monday Night Bible Study: Current topic: **Biblical Doctrines – Key Christian Beliefs.** Currently meeting at Calvary Chapel - Lafayette, 2111 E. State St., Lafayette, Monday nights at 6:30pm. For more information, call: 765-714-5113. Change of # effective Oct. 2010.

Calvary Chapel – Lafayette worship time: 10:30am/ Sunday,

2111 E. State Street, Lafayette, IN – Joe Bell, Pastor

Harvest Chapel – Lafayette 9am, 11am/ Sunday, meeting at Judi’s Catering – Tom Camp, Pastor  
Harvest Chapel – Attica 11am / Sunday, 129 N. Perry St., Attica, IN – Greg Tyra, Pastor  
Harvest Chapel – Logansport 10:30am/ Sunday, 212 S. 6<sup>th</sup> St, Logansport, IN – Randy Griffith, Pastor

\* \* \*

Recommended websites and reading:

[www.christianworldviewnetwork.com](http://www.christianworldviewnetwork.com) – Brannon Howse  
[www.thebereancall.org](http://www.thebereancall.org) – The Berean Call, Dave Hunt & T.A. McMahon  
[www.WorldNetDaily.com](http://www.WorldNetDaily.com) – Joseph Farah  
[www.moriel.org](http://www.moriel.org) – Moriel Ministries, Jacob Prasch  
[www.ariel.org](http://www.ariel.org) – Ariel Ministries, Arnold Fructenbaum  
[www.watch.org](http://www.watch.org) – Bill Koenig, White House Correspondent

1. *The Last Christian Generation* – Josh McDowell
2. *Seduction of Christianity* – Dave Hunt & T.A. McMahon
3. *Fox: Voices of the Martyrs* – John Foxe and The Voice of the Martyrs
4. *Apollyon Rising 2012* – Thomas Horn – This book is highly recommended for understanding the days that are upon us.

\* \* \*

We currently have several of Walt’s teachings available on CD & DVD.

1. “The Day of the Lord”
2. “Spiritual Warfare”
3. “Mammon – the other god” & “Federal Reserve Briefing”
4. “What Time Is It?”

Item numbers 3 & 4 are available on DVD.

If you are interested in ordering any, contact us at [jw.hartwich@gmail.com](mailto:jw.hartwich@gmail.com) for prices and ordering.

\* \* \*

We wish to thank God for supplying the ways and means for publishing this quarterly update and to those whose hearts He has moved to donate to the cause of teaching the church.

We solicit your prayers for our ministry that we will continue with boldness as we present the truth, no matter what; and that **we** will not be deceived as **no one** is immune.

If you would like for Walt to speak at your church or group, or if you have questions regarding anything you’ve read in our Update or any biblical subject, you may send your requests via mail or email to [jw.hartwich@gmail.com](mailto:jw.hartwich@gmail.com) or call 765-714-5113 / 765-426-1413. Change of phone # effective Oct 2010.

If you wish to add someone or be deleted from this mailing list, respond by mail or email. **Changes of address are appreciated to keep the cost of mailing to a minimum.** If you wish to receive your newsletter via email rather than regular mail, please notify us of that as well.

\* \* \*

**“No man can be true to God and escape unpopularity.”** (Author Unknown)

Victory Seekers Ministries  
P.O. Box 6971  
Lafayette, IN 47903-6971

Return Service Requested

Victory Seekers Ministries is based on the scriptures **Ephesians 5:11** *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”* and **Colossians 2:4, 8-10** *“lest any man should beguile you with enticing words...beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power”*.