

# FROM BAD TO GREAT

## GALATIANS 5:16-26

*The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, December 12, 2010, by Rev (Dr) Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.*

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### INTRODUCTION:

In the book “The Trapp Family Singers”, the Trapp family falls into disfavour with the Nazis who were rising to power just before World War II. As a result they had to escape from their lovely home in Austria and head for Switzerland. As Hitler’s troops closed in on Austria, the von Trapp family escaped to a church, then to a roof, and finally to the country, where they climbed the mountains to freedom. They eventually made it to America, where they settled in Stowe, Vermont and became nationally famous for their lovely musical performances. The von Trapp family never lost their gratitude for the freedom they enjoyed in America. Even though they left behind a fortune in land, estates and gold, they willingly traded it for freedom.

Like the von Trapp family, Jesus has provided an escape from the bondage and tyranny of sin. Yes, we need to give up some things that the world considers valuable; but what can compare to the spiritual freedom now and eternal reward in heaven? The exchange is well worth it.

The Galatian believers had received the Spirit (Galatians 3:2); there could be no denying that. But to receive the spirit is not the end. They were exhorted to “live by the Spirit”, literally meaning ‘walk’. God’s commands are a way, or road, or path. To obey them is to walk or run in God’s way. To disobey the commands of God is to step off God’s path, to trespass.

We need to choose the Spirit over the flesh. The warfare between flesh and Spirit was unceasing inside Paul (and many, if not all of us today). Paul had to choose to walk i.e guided, enlightened, and helped by the Spirit. Paul was not pretending that his choice to walk by the spirit was easier compared to if he was under the Law. It was difficult – a narrow road – but he considered the exchange well worth it.

*Principle:* The Christian is freed from external control by the law to internal control by the Holy Spirit.

### FREEDOM FROM THE LAW AND ITS NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

...Having been set free from the negative effects of the law, the Christian should not return to it. Returning to the law requires having to keep the whole law perfectly, which is impossible. In Christ however, faith working through love avails anything.

### FREEDOM TO LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE

...Christ gives the Christian freedom to love others truly.

### FREEDOM TO LIVE AND LOVE EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT.

...Release from the law and the power to love are results of God’s working in us by His Holy Spirit.

### IMPLICATIONS OF BEING LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Everybody is a slave to something...either good or bad. You cannot expect to harvest the fruit of God when you are sowing the seeds of evil.

Freedom in Christ does not give us the right to do as we please but the liberty to do as we ought.

*“Legalists in our churches today warn that we dare not teach people about the liberty we have in Christ lest it results in religious anarchy. The Christian who lives by faith is not going to become a rebel. Quite the contrary, he is going to experience the inner discipline of God that is far better than the outer discipline of man-made rules.” Warren Wiersbe.*

**DISCUSSION:**

In what ways does the church with its programmes and rituals threaten to enslave us and thereby keep us from the freedom Christ wants us to enjoy in Him?

What can we do to ensure that we are not enslaved to the church? And what can we do to make sure the church is enslaved to Christ instead?

Why does freedom in Christ not give you the freedom to enjoy the pleasures of the world?

How do you keep in step with the Spirit? Any examples?

**PRAYER:**

*Dear Lord, progress is so satisfying and regression so saddening. You have changed me in many, many, wonderful ways. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, help me to move forward and not fall back. Make me a large, green-leaved, lustrous tree filled with the fruit of Your Spirit. Work in me privately so You can be seen in me publicly. Amen.*