

## Galatians #9 - God's Good is Bigger Than Your Bad

- Alrighty, we're in the book of Galatians and today we're gonna jump ahead to Galatians, chapter four and we're gonna look at two mothers and felt that this was fitting for Mother's Day and you're gonna get to know them. One of the women's names is Sarah. The other is Hagar. So let me just kind of set it all up. Let me start by telling you that God, God is highly relational and God has a family. In fact, we refer to God, the father, God, the son, it's this familial relational language and then the third member of the trinity is God, the Holy Spirit. God created angelic beings to be like a family with him. Sometimes the angels are actually called the sons of God and Grace and I just started finishing up a book on all of this and the supernatural and the angelic and it all goes to the publisher tomorrow. But God loves to have relationship. God doesn't need anyone, but God loves to do things in relationship. And one of the primary motifs for how God operates and works is family. Father, son and spirit and then again, the angelic hosts, the angels that God made are called the sons of God. And so God has a divine family of angelic spirit beings. And then God also has a human family of human beings and that's us. And that started with our first parents, Adam and Eve. And they were the first husband and wife, first mother and father. And they are the beginning of the human family. And God created them to live in an environment of grace. And that place that he made for them was called the garden of Eden. And it was a place of grace, so that God would love them and provide for them and have relationship with them and care for them and meet with them and it was a life-giving place. And then what happens is that an enemy of God arrives into that place. That there had previously been this painful battle in the heavenly realm where some of God's angelic family decided to rebel against God. The demons were the result of angels who declared war on God. There was a family fight and the fight was over who gets to be the father over the family. Well, obviously God is the creator and father, but some of the angelic beings decided, you know what, We wanna do things differently in this family. We wanna do things independently in this family. We wanna do things our way in this family. And as a result, there was rebellion in the family. God won this war against Satan and demons cast them down to earth. I think it's in Luke 12:41, where Jesus says, I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Well, the war that was fought in God's angelic family now shows up for God's human family. And they, our first parents, Adam and Eve and Satan shows up as a crafty serpent and he tempts them to rebel against God and to not acknowledge God as father and to live under his dominion. And as a result, our first mother takes that, which is forbidden and she hands it to her passive husband who then partakes and sin erupts and it corrupts everything that God created good. And now in place of life, there is death. In place of relationship with God, there is separation from God. In place of grace, there is a lot of pain, a lot of pain. And God in his grace shows up and he speaks a promise and God works through promises, you're gonna hear about one today in Galatians four. And oftentimes, most of the time, the promise is pointing to the person of Jesus Christ as the solution because we are the problem and Jesus is the solution. So God shows up and he tells our first parents, Adam and Eve, that there's gonna be a lot of problems for your family because of your sin, but through your family is going to come Jesus Christ, that through our first mother Eve would come a succession of generations that ultimately would bring forth Jesus as the son

of God and our savior. The storyline of Genesis then moves forward and a man shows up named Abraham. He is a Gentile, not a Jew. He is chosen by God for grace, to be loved, to be forgiven, to be embraced and saved. And then that begins the Jewish nation through the Gentile men, but it starts with God in Genesis 12, making a promise that through Abraham and his wife, Sarah is going to come Jesus. And he's gonna fix all the problems for the human family and ultimately, for our families. God then repeats his promise in Genesis 15. Abraham, you and Sarah are gonna have, not just a kid, but you're gonna have a son. Now the problem becomes in the storyline is that they are quite old. When God first speaks a promise to them that they're gonna have a son, they're barren, they're elderly. They're beyond childbearing years. They've been unable to conceive of a child, though that was likely something that they longed for. And when God makes the promise, you're gonna have a son, Sarah was 65. Ladies, just let that sit in. Imagine at 65 you're at target, looking for onesies. Now here's what's even weirder, he was 75. Imagine changing diapers. Yours and your kids at 75. You're like, that's a lot of diapers, right? Like, I'm wearing a diaper, they're wearing a diaper. It feels like we're late bloomers. So what happens is she is 65, he is 75 and God says, you're gonna have a son. And you know what? They wait 10 years, no kid. How many of you have been waiting for God for a long time? They come to the conclusion that God gave a promise and he's not gonna fulfill it. And so, they decide, you know what, we'll help God out. We'll help God out. And so Sarah, of all people, you can read this in Genesis 16, she devises a plan. She says, well, we've got this other gal we know named Hagar. She's a young Egyptian gal. Abraham, why don't you have a baby with her? What is Abraham say? Well, you know, I wanted to make my wife happy. So he decides that he's gonna go along with the plan. You're like, this is the weirdest Mother's Day sermon ever. Oh, we've only begun. And so, what happens is he and Hagar have a son named Ishmael. Oh and guess what? Who could have seen this coming? Sarah is not happy. And what she says in Genesis 16, she basically yells at her husband. I can't believe you did this to me. Whose idea was it? Hers, let me say this. If your spouse tells you to do something and you do it and they're angry at you, you have a biblical marriage. That's my point, okay? Like, why are you mad at me? I did what you said. Yeah, that's the problem. Oh boy, okay, we need the Lord. That's the whole point. Okay, so what happens then is that Sarah and Hagar, shockingly have a lot of conflict. But then God does fulfill his promise and eventually, Sarah has a boy. His name is Isaac. Isaac means laughter because God always gets the last laugh. That's the point, right? So now though, how many sons do you have? Two. How many wives do you have? Two. How many is that? Too many. How many of you are like, yeah. What I'm gonna say is inappropriate. It's only beginning, but imagine if you got divorced and still lived with your ex and your spouse and your kids and their kids? Anyone see, oh, I heard a, mm-mm, mm-mm, mm-mm, mm-mm. One woman said, mm-mm and I'm guessing hands were on the hips like this, mm-mm, mm-mm. Okay, so this is the family dynamics. How many of you, you come from a family that didn't get it right the first time? Any of you have a family that's poorly architected, got in-laws, outlaws, all kinds of problems? Any of you? You've got a whole side of the family, you're like, what about them? We don't talk about them. We don't talk about them. They're not in the Christmas card. We don't know what to do with them. Every family... Every family has... Flaws... Faults... Failures... And this family has flaws, faults, failures. Some of you may not know the Bible very well. And you may wrongly assume the Bible is about all the good people who did it right. How

many of you've read the Bible and you realize that that's not who's in there? It's all the bad people that God had to make it right. And so what happens then is the promise is given that the inheritance, the land, the promise of God, the coming of Jesus would come to the first born son of Abraham and now there's a debate. Is that Ishmael who was born first or is that Isaac who was the son of the promise? And it's a debate and it's a conflict. And it continues in our day. Now that being said, all of that sets up for you, the story in Galatians four. And so, the problem started with the first family when the woman take that, which was forbidden fruit, handed it to the husband. And then, the problem repeats itself with Abraham and Sarah, where she takes the forbidden woman, hands that woman to the husband, he partakes, the result is death, death, death, problems and pains for the family. But ultimately, Jesus is coming through one of these family lines, Hagar and Ishmael or Sarah and Isaac. And the debate is over which one. And I've told you that the theme of Galatians is God creates and Satan counterfeits. And so, God creates this line of promise. And now, Satan is trying to counterfeit with another family that will receive the promises of God and they do not have faith in God. So all of that sets up Galatians, chapter four. And I wanna talk about law families and grace families. That families tend to operate either out of law or grace. And this has tremendous implications and applications for our church family. You need to know that this church, the Trinity church is a family. It's a family and in it are lots of families and your family, individually and our families, collectively are either gonna be law based or grace based. Let me explain this. So, Paul's gonna get into this in Galatians. And he's going to tell us the difference between law based and grace based. Hagar and Ishmael are one side of the family. They have no faith. They don't trust in the God of the Bible. They don't believe in or belong to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That's not their team. From Hagar and Ishmael comes the Arab peoples. The Arab nations of the world. They are the physical descendants of Abraham and Hagar and then ultimately, through Ishmael. Most of them, their predominant religion is Islam, they're Muslims. And their religion is primarily predominantly law based. Law based, we'll get into all of this. And so, when they read the accounts of Abraham, they say, our mother Hagar, she is the real wife. Our father, Ishmael, he is the real son of the promise. And they reinterpret all of Genesis very differently than those who are physical and spiritual descendants of Sarah and Isaac. Sarah and Isaac are born into a family that is for sure sinful. Both of these families are sinful, but they do have faith in God. From this family line comes the Jewish people. Who ultimately comes from the Jewish people? Jesus. There was a promise given, Genesis 12, Genesis 15, that Abraham, the blessing to the nations is going to come through your seed, through your descendant, through your male son and heir. His name is Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ. And so, physically those who are descendants of this family are Jewish spiritually, those of us who are Christian are the spiritual descendants of Abraham, having faith in the son of the promise, his descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith is based upon grace. All of this is going to be shown forth in Galatians four, as he juxtaposes one father, two families, one that is law based, one that is grace based. Now, let me say this as well. What's pretty awesome today in many Arab nations, those who were previously Muslim, you know what, they're becoming Christians. Pray for the persecuted and underground church in Iraq. One of the fastest growing places that Christianity is spreading today is in places like Iran. That many Muslim people are going to bed, having dreams that they will stand before Jesus and give an account for their life. God is doing supernatural things. As you read the story

of Abraham and Sarah, it's not that one is good and the other is bad, they're both bad. Sarah's bad, God is gracious to her. Hagar is bad, God shows up in Genesis 16, meets to her, loves her, blesses her. They both have sons from the sons come two nations. And though they are born, all of their descendants need to be born again, though they have a spiritual birth from an earthly father, they need a heavenly birth from God, the father. And the good news is you can be Arab or you could be Jewish, you could be whatever you are, everybody needs Jesus and to become a Christian. And so it's not, are you in this family or this family? Ultimately, Jesus makes a new family and he invites all the nations to be part of this new family. But the backdrop for Galatians four is this particular conflict. Before we jump into Galatians four, just a couple of things that I wanna point out from the story of Abraham was Sarah and Isaac and Hagar and Ishmael.

Number one, God is in charge, controls, sovereign over the ends and the means. So what God told them was, I'm gonna give you a son. That's the ends. Sarah decides, we'll take care of the means. God is sovereign over the ends and the means. If God tells you to do something, you'll be part of his means. If he tells you that he's gonna do everything, you don't have anything to do, you need to wait for him. Number two, because there's a difference between God's will and God's timing. God told him, my will is to give you a son, but his timing was 10 plus years. Some of you, God has given you his will and you need to be patient to wait for his timing. And as you're waiting for his timing, don't take matters into your own hands, trust that it's in God's hands. Number three, when we help God, all we do is hurt everyone. What Sarah decides is, I'll help God out. We'll get Hagar and she'll have a baby. Well that'll help. Did it help? No. We actually have a geopolitical crisis today because of a family feud that was 4,000 years ago. If Abraham didn't sleep with two women, much of the geopolitical crisis on planet earth would not exist. And here's my next point. The decisions we make affect generations. Abraham and Sarah made some decisions for their family that are still affecting our families 4,000 years later. In addition, every family needs faith. Every family needs faith. And it is sometimes the hardest thing to have faith for your family. Now let me say this. This whole family got it wrong, but God is going to make it right. Because here's what is really, really, really good, hopeful, encouraging news is that ultimately, God is bigger than our failures. God is bigger than our faults. God is bigger than our flaws. God is bigger than our family. And so, I want to solve just to say, you know what, let's just be honest about the things that our family got right and the things that our family got wrong. And then let's look Jesus to give us grace to make it all according to God's plan and provision and purpose. So, that being said, we're gonna go to Galatians four. That is my off the cuff riff summary of the story in Genesis and now when we go to Galatians, it is about 2,000 years later. At this point, Jesus Christ has come as the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. And that he has lived, died and rose and then people become believers in Jesus Christ. They're born again through the spirit of God. They're forming together as a new family called the church. And this church in Galicia was planted, started, fathered by a man named Paul. And he was a very religious works law based man, we'll get into that, who experienced and was transformed by the grace of God and Jesus Christ. So to give you something of his heart, let me just begin Galatians 4:19 and 20. He's writing them a letter. He'd planted a church, he left, false teachers came in. He's worried about them and he says, my little children, you know what that is? Parental language. Good leadership has a parental heart for people. Good spiritual leadership has a parental heart for people. That means if you're a woman, we want you

to love people like a mother loves her kids. If you're a man, we want you to love people like a father loves us kids. Paul has parental heart, he has the father's heart for the church family. You need to know, I love you and I have a father's heart for our church family and I love you like I love my family. I love you like I love my family and grace loves you like we love our family. And just as we're a mother and a father in our home, we wanna be a loving, helpful, spiritual mother and father here in the church family among you all. And to have other leaders who the men love like fathers and the women love like mothers. And if that happens, we can have a really awesome church family, amen? And that's what God is doing. And that's what we wanna be preserving. He says, my little children for whom I am in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you. So he uses this analogy where he says, I love you so much and I want you to grow to become like Jesus. It's kind of like the pains of childbirth. Now, let me just say, us men... We don't fully understand. Hey man, have you been present for the birth of a child? Ladies, if I were to ask you, what is the one word that comes to mind when I say childbirth? Pain? Anything else? Pain, anything else? Pain? Okay, I see a theme. It's pain, right? It's pain, it's painful. It's painful to birth and raise a child. And Paul says, spiritually, it's painful to see somebody made Jesus and to raise them. You're gonna need to experience a little bit of pain if you love so that life can come. And so, he goes on to say, I mean, the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, I wish I could be present with you and change my tone for I'm perplexed about you. So he's gonna be very tender with the people and very tough with the false teachers. And this is how we need to be. We need to be tender with the family and tough for the family. Some of you men, you're tough with your family. No, be tough for your family, tender with your family. So he's gonna then tell us about law versus grace. And he starts in Galatians 4:21 through 25. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law. We'll talk about law, explain law. The function of law. Law's a big concept in your Bible. The first five books of your Bible are called the books of the law. They were written by Moses. They actually have 613 laws. So there's a lot of law in here. What do we do with it? Do you not listen to the law for it is written that Abraham had, what? Two sons, he's back to the story of Abraham, Isaac, Abraham, Ishmael, two sons. One by a slave woman, that's Hagar. One by a free woman, that's Sarah. But the son of the slave, that is Ishmael. And that is Hagar was born according to the flesh, just normal relations, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Sarah was barren and elderly. And God had to do something extraordinary. What he is saying is this, people are born naturally. You need to be born again supernaturally. That the way you came into this world was according to the flesh, it was according to the natural. The way you're going to have a relationship with God and enter into eternal life, it's going to be supernatural, according to the spirit. See we can do things that cause people to be born, but we can't do anything to cause people to be born again. We can decide that people will be born physically, but we can't decide that someone's gonna be born again spiritually. That takes a miracle, that takes God. That you're born again differently than you're born. The son was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically. The Bible is interpreted literally, there's two kinds of literal. Plain literal, figurative literal. Sometimes God will use a figure of speech to communicate a literal truth. And on occasion, where God uses an allegory or topology, he often tells us. So he says, okay, let me just use these as sort of categories and topologies. These women are two covenants. Old covenant, new covenant. Covenant of law,

covenant of grace. This is where we get the old Testament and the new Testament. One is for Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. She is Hagar, now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. So let me talk to you a little bit about law versus grace. The function and purpose of law is, who's in, who's out? Who's good, who's bad? We need a criteria to decide who's in, who's out, who's good, who's bad. When it comes to law, what we're talking about is what you do. We're talking about your performance. We're talking about your achievement. We're talking about your accomplishment. See, we live in a world that is law based. Your grades, you have to earn them. Your income, you have to earn it. Everything that you have in this world, you've gotta work for and you've gotta earn it because someone is keeping score and it's based upon performance, execution and merit. That's how the world works. That's law, law produces works. Here are the requirements, go do it, go do it, go do it, so that you can earn whatever it is that you aspire to obtain or to have. When it comes to our relationship with God, it is very different how God does relationship. God does relationship different than anything else in your life. But people who will have a law based, works based, performance base, results based, achievement based view of God, they tend to think in one of three categories of law. Most people just simply say, I'm a good person. Therefore, I'm sure God is fine with me. I don't need to do anything more. I've lived a decent life. What I have done is good enough. That's what I would have said at the age of 19. They've said, well, how do you know you're gonna go to heaven when you died. I say, well, I'm a good person. I've lived a good life. I believe in God. I'm better than most. I'm sure that God grades on a curve and I haven't punched anyone that didn't deserve it. So me and God are probably fine. That's probably what I would have said. The second category are religious people who say actually, for God to be okay with you, you need to perform, you need to produce, you need to work, you need to do something. So then, religion comes in with a list of things to do, that's laws. You need to reincarnate, suffer and pay God back. You need to go to purgatory after you die before you go to heaven to work at it a little bit so that God will be pleased with you. You need to suffer. You need to tithe 10%. You need to speak in a per language of tongues. You need to be baptized. You need to go on a mission trip. You need to be in the right church. You need to do all of... Here's the list of things to do and don't. And then, most people that are in the culture that do believe that we need to do something, so that God will love us, I'll call them cause warriors. The secular version of this is, there's good people and bad people and here's our cause. And if you will join our cause and fight for our cause and march for our cause, you're one of the good guys. And if not, you're bad. And some of those causes are good, but none of them forgive sin. None of them reconcile relationship with God. And I'm telling you that all who are hearing this sermon today, you're either assuming that you're good enough, you're trying to do something that God would love you and or you are working in a social justice, cause oriented, do-gooder attitude where you believe that you're better than other people and that God is pleased with you because you're the good guys. So where's the hope? Grace. Grace. Grace is different. Grace is not what you do, grace is what Jesus has done. So, many people will look at it and say, well, God is Holy in heaven and we're sinful on earth. Somebody needs to do something. And I would say, yes. It ain't you, it's Jesus. The someone is Jesus. And the something is his works, not your works. Think of it this way. How many of you are gonna get up and go to work tomorrow? Now imagine you went into work and there was somebody there on the job doing your job. You're

like, what are you doing? They said, I'm here to do your work. Well, you can't take my job. No, no, no, I'm not taking it. I'm taking your place, but I'm doing your job. I'm gonna show up early. I'm gonna stay late. I'm gonna do a good job. I'm gonna do all of your work. You just go home. And I'm gonna let you keep the paycheck and all the benefits. I'm gonna do all the work. You're gonna get all the benefits. How many of you? That would be awesome, amen. How many of you are like, let's pray for that right now, Pastor Margot, that would be amazing. Is this a prophecy? I receive it Lord. How much would you love somebody who did all your work and gave you all the benefits? Jesus did all the work and gave you all the benefits. And so, law leads to works. What you need to do, grace leads to Jesus. He's done three kinds of work. He's done a work for you. So God comes into human history. The father sends the son. Jesus lives without sin. He lived the life you've not lived. Jesus dies on the cross. He dies the death you deserve. And he rises to conquer death, the enemy that you cannot defeat to give salvation, the gift you cannot earn. So that's Jesus work for you. Jesus then does a work in you. How many of you, Jesus has changed your heart? How many of you, Jesus is started this massive change process in you? The things you used to love, they were evil, you now hate them. The things that you used to hate that were good for you, you now love. You love people. You love God. You hate sin. Your mind is changing. Your nature has changed. Your heart is changing, your desires. Jesus is doing a work in you, amen. That's grace... And then Jesus does work through you later in Galatians, who call this fruit. Now, the work that Jesus did for you and the work that Jesus does in you starts to change your conduct and character and that's the work of Jesus through you. Start forgiving people cause you forgive and you start being generous to people because God was generous to you in Christ. You started loving people because God loved you in Christ. And all of a sudden it's literally the grace of God flowing down from heaven, flowing through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, flowing through your art, flowing through your life, so you get to be a means of God's grace and be a blessing to other people. So let me ask you this. When it comes to law and grace, according to the Bible, which came first, law, then grace? The story of Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac, which son came first? Ishmael, the son of the law. And he was an only child until Isaac was born later, the son of the promise. And he's using this analogy saying, law came first and then Jesus came and Jesus is the fulfillment of the law. Now, here's where I'm going with this. What God is teaching us here is that we need to pay attention to what I'll call environment or culture or atmosphere. A friend of mine was teaching last week, I was preaching in Michigan and I heard him teach and he had a great insight I was excited to share with you. What he said was that for every one and everything that God made, he an environment for it, in which that he made would flourish and have fullness of life. Let's give you an example. God created birds and birds have an environment that is in the air. That's where they flourish, they're free. That's the environment that they were created for. Fish were created by God and he created for them an environment called, the water and they flourish in that environment. What happens if you throw the fish in the air? Wrong environment, bad day for the fish. What if you take the bird and shove it under the water? Bad day for the bird, wrong environment. Question, did God make you? Next question, what environment did he create for you to live in so that you could flourish? Grace. Grace. People flourish, they live, they grow, they get healthy in an environment of grace, not an environment of law. Not an environment of law. So let me explain the difference between law and grace. Law is about what you have to do.

Grace is about what you get to do. Do you see the difference? I'll tell you this. You don't have to receive God's love, you get to receive God's love. You don't have to have your sins forgiven, you get to have your sins forgiven. You don't have to read the Bible, you get to read the Bible. I would never look at a little kid and say, you have to eat your ice cream. They'd be like, what? And so, sometimes what we can do, God gives us something as a means of grace that's gonna be good for us and we're gonna enjoy and we turn it into a law. We take things that we get to do and we turn them into things that we have to do. Law is about what you have to do. Grace is about what you get to do. Law is ultimately about control. And the laws, the rules are made to control you. How many of you don't like to be controlled? Children that are reared in high control, law based environments, it sometimes works when they're little, but they rebel when they get older. How many of you have seen this? You raise the child in a law based home and they get older and they absolutely rebel because a grace based environment is not about law, it's about grace and laws about control, grace is about influence. Do you know who the most powerful people are in your life? The people that love you the most. Because if you know that they love you and they care about you and they're concerned for you and they're committed to you, you're going to welcome them to influence you. Influence, how many of you know the difference between influence and control? Grace allows an environment where you're safe and loved and people who care about you influence you toward health and life. It's not about control, it's about influence. Law is largely non-relational. The person makes the rules and you deal with the rules, not the person. Grace is highly relational. This is why Jesus didn't stand in heaven and just say, okay, here we go. There's some rules. What did he do? He came down. He came down to the earth. Because grace is relational. Grace does life with you. Grace gets to know you. That's what creates relationship. Furthermore, law is... It is proud. And it's all about who did what was right. And then judging who didn't do what was right. So it's about pride and judgment. How many of you don't like being in proud, judgemental environments? Grace is humble. Grace forgives. Grace blesses. Grace embraces and I can just hear it. I can hear it in your soul. Some of you law people are like, well, we need people to obey, right? And grace is stronger than law. And grace is more powerful than law. And law tells you what to do, but doesn't give you the power to do it? Grace not only tells you what to do, grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit, gives you the power to do it. Here's what happens in a law based environment. People feel beat up. In a grace based environment, people feel built up. Because here's the key. In a law based environment, love is at the finish line. If you do the right thing, if you say the right thing, if you try hard, if you run all the way to the finish line, maybe then, God will love you. That's why religious people live in fear and terror. They never know what's gonna happen in the end. What if I trip over my feet as I head to the finish line? Will God's love be there for me? Yes, do you know why? Because God's love is not at the finish line. God's love is at the starting line. You start your relationship with the Lord Jesus with love and grace. You start your relationship with the Lord Jesus, his love to you, his grace to you, that's where it starts. Now, here's why I tell you this. People tend to take how they view their relationship with God and then use that for all their other relationships. If you feel that God is law based, you're gonna be law based. If you feel God is controlling, you're gonna be controlling. If you feel that God is punitive, you're gonna be punitive. If you feel that God threatens, you're gonna threaten. If you feel that God ultimately beats people up, you're gonna beat people up. And if you feel that God doesn't give grace till the finish



line, you're not gonna give people grace until the finish line. And what that'll create is a culture and environment and atmosphere of death. Because that's not the environment that God's people were created to live in. We were made to live in an environment of grace. And he juxtaposes all of this between Hagar and Ishmael and Sarah and Isaac. One is a family of law. One is a family of grace. So... What does this mean? This section, John Stott, he's a new Testament scholar, says it is perhaps the most difficult section of the whole new Testament. And I thought we're going through Galatians. I want to get it done, you know, in a reasonable amount of time. I'll just do Hagar and Sarah, that'll be fun. Wow, this has been a bit of work today. Let me boil it and break it down. For your life, your relationship with God, if you're married or going to be married, your marriage. If you're going to have children for the home environment, for our church family, that we would have the environment in which people can flourish. There are three kinds of environments, three kinds of families, three kinds of church families, three kinds of atmospheres, three kinds of cultures, grace based. When Paul planted the church in Galatians, it was grace based. It was about Jesus work, not ours. Jesus love given freely, not earned by us. Paul then leaves. In comes false teachers who are law based. Here's all the rules, performance, control, punishment. What has happened, the people in Galicia and the Galician church, they're confused. So what they're trying to do is balance, okay, all the laws and rules and all the grace and they're totally confused and they're conflicted. Which one is right? Which one is godly? One, two or three? One. Which one did you grow up in? Which one are you currently practicing for the environment that you're creating for other people? A grace based environment, it's peaceful, it's loving, it's healthy, it's fun. You know, because people don't feel like they're always at work performing. Every day is not, you know, going to get a performance review or a grade. Because love doesn't keep a record of wrongs. So these are joyful, healthy, fun loving, free environments and again, you law people, you're like, well, how are we going to get them to obey? Let me tell you this. People will do more for love than they will for law. What happens in law based environments, people get sneaky and they hide. And grace based environments, they say, I'm struggling with this, can you help? It actually makes them holier or not less holy. All law based environments create is hypocrisy and hiddenness, not holiness. In a law based environment, this can be your business. This can be a ministry. This can be your marriage. This can be your family. It's fear based. It's punishment based. It's discouraging. It's judgmental. How many of you, you've been in those environments? You're like, I can do a hundred things right. I do one thing wrong. That's the only thing we're talking about. As soon as I make a mistake, the hammer drops. Even if I already know that I blew it, you're gonna make sure that I knew that I blew it and we're gonna make it known to others and we're gonna make it public and we're gonna get everybody involved. It's shame-based, it's fear-based, it's punishment based. It's not very fun. When you put these two together, law and grace based, here's what Paul is saying. That's like Sarah and Isaac living with Hagar and Ishmael. What kind of home is that? Miserable for everyone. Miserable for everyone. How many of you grew up in a family where one of the parents was law based and the other was grace based? One is the fun one. One is the mean one. One is the good cop. One is the bad cop. One is Jesus. One is Lucifer as you grew up in the home. So let me say this. People need an environment in which they can flourish and be healthy. What is the environment that God created people to live in? Grace. Grace. Grace. So let me say this. In your home, you've got a thermostat, amen? We're in

Arizona. If you're new, you need it. June, July are coming. August is coming, you're gonna need it. Our AC broke last summer. Kids are like, what are we gonna do? Leave, we're gonna leave. We're going to the hotel. You know why? This is no longer gonna be a suitable environment, amen? Your home not only has a physical temperature, it has a spiritual, emotional, relational temperature. It's an environment. The dad, let me speak to the men, the husbands, the fathers, the dads, the dads-to-be, you tend to be the thermostat. You set the temperature. How many of you in your home, your dad set the temperature? They're like, we're having fun, then dad came home. The temperature changed. What happens in a law based environmental home is this. It's gets too hot. It gets too heated. Voices are raised, conflict happens. Criticism happens, law and punishment are happening. It gets really heated, it's hot. And then what happens? It gets really cold. Everybody goes to their rooms and stops talking together. The kids move away and never come back. The kids drive in the car and get as far away as fast as they can. A law based environment is too hot and it's too cold. It's not a comfortable temperature spiritually, emotionally, relationally, am I making sense? The dad tends to be the thermostat and the mom tends to be the thermometer. That's why it's a thermometer, it's mom. I just made that up. If it was good, I'll stick with it. Mom tends to know what the temperature is, but dad tends to be the one who sets the temperature in the home. What's happening in Galicia is this. Paul is the dad. He's trying to set the thermostat. What he's saying is, if the law based people get to set the thermostat, this is not gonna be a comfortable, healthy environment for the children of God. And as a result, he is fighting the legalistic law based, works based people who are trying to change the thermostat. And he's saying, no, I'm the dad. I set the thermostat in this house. And if you set it to where you want, these kids are not gonna be healthy. They're not gonna be safe. It's important, right? Environments matter, atmospheres matter, cultures matter. He then continues that ultimately, where we need to understand environment is from the kingdom of God. That the kingdom of God, let me just tell you this, the kingdom of God is where Jesus rules and reigns and there is no counterfeit, all we have is Christ. He calls it the new Jerusalem, Galatians 4:26, 27. The Jerusalem from above is free. What is that? It's heaven. Do you know where Jesus is right now? He's in heaven, the kingdom of God, it's called the new Jerusalem. Do you know that right now, Jesus has set a culture, an atmosphere, an environment in his kingdom. What do you think that environment is? Grace. Grace, forgiveness, love, mercy, generosity. Do you know what people do when they're in that environment? They spring to life. You know, what law leaves people with, it's almost like the desert after the hundred days of a hundred degrees. And then the rain comes. Next thing you know, boom, there's life. Law, all by itself, produces a desert. Grace brings life and flourishing in the midst of the desert. And what he's saying is that culture of heaven, it's a grace based environment. Let me tell you this. There's nobody in heaven right now going, I don't like it here. Everybody's joyful and forgiven and I'm so disappointed. I liked it when we argued. No one is saying that in heaven. The Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother. Not only do you have an earthly father, if you are a Christian, God is your heavenly father. You've been born again. And he's also saying that just like you had an earthly mother, so you're born of the kingdom of God. That means you carry forth the DNA of the kingdom of God. When your mother birthed you, you carried some of her attributes forward. When you're birthed into the kingdom of God, you bring forth because of the spirit of God, some of the attributes, some of the spiritual genetic DNA, the imprint of the kingdom of God. What that

means is, you're needing grace. You're needing love. You're needing love and mercy and relationship and kindness and hope and as you receive those things, your life flourishes because that's the environment you're made for. For it is written, he quotes Isaiah 54, one rejoice. Isn't that great? Do you know what grace produces? Rejoicing. Rejoicing because you know what? Every family gets it wrong and God is big enough to make it right, that's why we rejoice! That there is hope. There is peace. There is grace. There is love. There is mercy. There is newness! And that's something that we rejoice and rejoice, O barren one who does not bear, break forth and cry aloud, you are not in labor for the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband. And what he's saying is this, that ultimately grace does what law cannot do. And that is birth, new life. That is flourishing and rejoicing. Now let me tell you briefly though, law is not bad. Law served a purpose. Law, number one, reveals to us the holiness of God. Number two, it reveals to us human sinfulness. Number three, it prepares us for a savior. As you read the Bible, you're like, I'm not doing those things. Okay, well then you're a sinner. Well, heck if I'm a sinner, well, how do we fix that? Well, that's why Jesus came. So the point of the law was to prepare us for Jesus. Furthermore, what the law did in the old Testament, it gathered God's people and it created a boundary, a barrier from them and the other nations of the earth. I have good news for you right now. There's a whole bunch of kids in the backyard having fun and we have a fence. What would happen if we didn't have a fence? We would have no children. Guaranteed, we may have a few firstborn girls, but we'd have no boys at all. That's what'd happen. Because boys are free range, amen? How many of you have lost a kid? And you had to find them because they run, they hide, they go, right? Okay, those of you they're like, I can't believe that people lose their child. Okay, now we know who the people are that don't have children. All the people who have children know exactly what I'm talking about. As soon as you look away, what does the kid do? They're gone, okay? God put a fence around his family, his kids. It was called the law. He said, nope, nope, you're not in that religion. You're not, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, stay here, stay here, stay here. Each of God's laws in the old Testament was like a plank and a fence to keep the kids from running away and wandering off to keep the family together, so that Jesus could come, forgive them, save them, heal them, serve them. But God wanted to keep the family together for Jesus to come. The whole point of the law was to create a fence, so that God's people could be ready for Jesus to come and save them. In addition, he says that the law was like a long period of childbearing. So let me revisit my question to the moms here on Mother's Day. What's it like to birth a child? It's painful, amen? I watched Grace birth five kids. I got a Shrek sized head. My wife birthed five kids. If you've not been in all this, they bring in a drug dealer. That's how painful this is. We call them a... What do we call them? Anesthesiologists. They came in. I'm like, what are you gonna do? They're like, we're gonna give her drugs. I was like, I need drugs, just to watch. I have a Groupon, can we both get a... Can we get an epidural, please? This is inappropriate, but there is a point. I hope, okay, so ladies, why do you go through all the pain of childbirth? Why do you do that? So that there can be new life. New life. What he says is that the law is like childbirth. It's painful, but God used it to bring Jesus and to birth in us, new life. I've never met a woman who says, I miss labor. It was over too fast. I've never met that woman. Now, women will say, I love the child, but I hated the labor. But I endured the labor to have the child. What a woman does, she endures a lot of pain to bring new life into the world and then she brings that new life into an

environment. So ladies, what do you do to prepare an environment to bring your baby home? What do you do? This is the participation portion of our time together. Nursery, what's in the nursery? A crib... A rocking chair. Diapers, more diapers and wipes and more wipes because the child is basically a sprinkler. It was just coming out of everywhere. But what a woman does, she does three things. She says, I'm gonna endure the pain to birth the life and I'm gonna bring it home to the right environment. God says, you know what? Salvation is like that. There was a season of law that was painful. Jesus comes, gives us new life. Now the key is that we need to live in the right environment. It's God's version of a nursery. That's what he's saying. That's why the environment always comes from heaven. That's why the environment comes down with Jesus. That's why when the Holy Spirit descends on people, he is bringing the presence of God and the grace of God to set the environment for the flourishing of the children of God. Last slide. Here's hope, okay? God's good is bigger than your bad. Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was bad, Sarah was bad. Hagar was bad, God was good, amen? Oh, good, your family's bad. If you married someone, their family's bad. That's why you don't let your families get together. God is good, amen? So we can be honest about our bad if we also are honest that God's good is bigger than our bad. Now, you brothers, family, family of God, like Isaac, are children of promise. God's made some promises to you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future. There's nothing you can do to make God love you any more. There's nothing you can do that will cause God to love you any less. God will never leave you. God will never forsake you. Jesus has gone to the father's house and right now, he is preparing an inheritance for you. All of those are promises for the children of God. That one day you will rise from the dead that you will be fully, totally, completely healed. You'll be reconciled together with family members, spiritual and physical, who belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will have joy forevermore and you will be living eternally in an environment that is totally, completely and eternally just grace! Wow, those are some promises, amen! You're the children of the promise! But just as at the time that he was born, according to the flesh, persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so it is now. Ishmael was older and he picked on Isaac. This world is gonna pick on you. And this world is gonna pick at you. And here's what happens. When they give you law, you give them grace. Grace because grace is stronger than law. Just like light casts out darkness. So, grace defeats law. So what does the scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son. What he's saying is, bring grace and push law away. For the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman. So brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. In closing and I'll bring the band up and we're gonna throw a party and we're gonna celebrate because here's the big idea that if you belong to the Lord, Jesus Christ, you now have a father. You have a father who is grace based. You have a father who is loving. You have a father who is passionate for you. You have a father who forgives you. You have a father who builds you up and doesn't beat you up. You have a father who has prepared you for his presence. That's the environment of grace. In addition, you have a family, your brothers and sisters. We want this to be a loving, healthy, grace based, life-giving environment for the children of God. And God wants you to create an environment where people around you, starting with family, starting with spouse, starting with kids, starting with friends, they experienced grace. They experienced love. They experienced the kingdom of God and the fullness of God. In addition, God has freedom for you, that's what he's saying. You can overcome addiction because of the power of the grace of

God. You can walk away from your past and have hope for your future because of the grace of God. Those things that have defined you no longer define you once Jesus Christ has saved you. And this language of freedom, I want you to embrace it. You don't have to excuse your sin. You don't have to manage your sin. You don't have to hide your sin. You can give it to the God of grace who will forgive you. You can give it to the God of grace who will embrace you. You will give it to the God of grace who will deliver you and free you to live in his presence by grace and become the person that God intends for you to be in his presence forevermore, amen! So we're gonna sing. We're gonna invite God's presence. We're gonna invite God's spirit. We're gonna invite God's grace, so that you can flourish. So that you can blossom. So that you can enjoy the fullness of life and freedom in Christ. And we'll partake of communion remembering, Jesus did all the work for this grace, amen? He broke his body. He shed his blood, so that he would do the work and we would receive the grace. So I'm gonna ask you all to stand and let's sing and celebrate, amen?