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Sermon Notes

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Living the Supernatural Life—Part 2

Romans 12:9-21

Introduction:

Romans 12 gives insight into the supernatural lives of Christians... lives that can only be lived by the power of God

Last week, we saw that this supernatural life is a matter of a transformed heart: **“Love must be sincere.”** We also saw that it is a life of fiery passion, of genuine zeal in service to the Lord

“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep you spiritual fervor serving the Lord.”

As I mentioned last week, the only way this supernatural life is possible is by trusting in the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, and by the gift of the indwelling Spirit

In other words, only Christians can live this supernatural life

Today we will look at three extremely ATTRACTIVE aspects of this supernatural life... attractive because they have the power to draw people into deep relationship with the heavenly Father when they see how we live our lives

- **Supernatural Love for the Family of God**
- **Supernatural Hospitality and Generosity**
- **Supernatural Joy in Trials**

I. Supernatural Love for the Family of God

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

A. The Worldwide Family of God

1. Upon being saved, we enter the worldwide family of God
 - a. It is truly international
 - b. It is made up of people from almost every ethnic group in the world
 - c. It is made up of people in every station in life

d. It is made up of people at all ages and both genders

2. This Family is Supernatural in Origin

John 1:12-13 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

a. God is our eternal Father...we are His adopted children

b. Christ is our Head and our Elder Brother

Hebrews 2:11 Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

3. The Family is United by the Spirit and by Truth: we all believe the same things about God and Christ, sin and death, heaven and hell... and we are all made one by the common indwelling Spirit

B. Love for the Family of God Inevitable Fruit of Faith

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

1 John makes the point again and again: If you don't love other Christians, you are not a Christian yourself

1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

This is the very thing that Paul is commanding in Romans 12... a supernatural love for the family of God

Sadly... it doesn't always happen this way!!

C. Contrasting Churches

The fact that churches often have bitter and divisive conflicts is an old one:

- The Corinthian church was rife with divisions
- In Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche couldn't get along
- Even Paul and Barnabas had such a sharp disagreement over John Mark that they agreed to part company

What a contrast to the supernatural church of the book of Acts:

1. A supernatural church in the Book of Acts

- A church that devoted itself DAILY to studying the teaching of the apostles
- A church that shared everything in common with the poor and needy in their number
- A church that sold lands and houses and laid the money at the apostles' feet so that the poor could have their needs met
- A church that spent all night praying for Peter to be released from prison
- A church that took up amazingly generous collections among poor Gentile believers to relieve poor Jewish believers
- A church that was characterized by boldness in the gospel and hospitality to the saints

D. Paul's Clear Statements

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

1. Paul combines two Greek words for love here... one a genial love and affection for someone, a deep tender affection of open love; WITH a family love, the love that comes from being in a family
2. Pictured again and again in Acts... like the love the church showed Paul
 - The way the elders from Ephesus weep over never seeing Paul again
 - The way the church at Tyre kneels with him in prayer on the beach
 - The way they opened their homes to him again and again in hospitality
 - The way they used their spiritual gifts to strengthen him
 - The way they prayed for him
 - The way each group of Christians greeted him warmly

E. Humility or glorious competition?

^{NIV} ***Romans 12:10 Honor one another above yourselves.***

1. NIV emphasizes humility

- a. Prefer others ahead of yourself... think of them as better than you are, seek to meet their needs ahead of your own, think of issues from their points of view
- b. We see others as they will be eventually, and we see ourselves as we are now... they will someday be glorious and we are presently sinful

Illus. Pilgrim's Progress, Part 2: Christiana and Mercy at the Interpreter's House with Christiana's children; Interpreter clothes them all in radiant white garments symbolic of their standing as pure in Christ

Amazingly though, none of them could see the beauty of their own garments, but only those of the others! So they all genuinely felt that they were shabby and unholy in comparison with their brothers and sisters in Christ!!

This is what it means to "honor one another above yourselves"

- c. It gets very practical too... it means to prefer someone else's needs or opinions above your own

Philippians 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

- i) So many churches divide over trivial matters...
- ii) Redecorating schemes, building programs, which organ to buy
- iii) Of course weightier matters like worship style and evangelistic strategies can also be sources of division
- iv) Paul calls on Christians to HONOR OTHERS AHEAD OF YOURSELF

- d. Especially important in a church... which is the most complex and diverse organism in the world; different ages, different social backgrounds, different cultures, different genders, different needs, different expectations... a recipe for disaster if not for supernatural humility

2. Interestingly, ESV emphasizes almost a holy competition in doing good

ESV Romans 12:10 Outdo one another in showing honor.

- a. Let's see who can serve the most
- b. Let's see who can be the most humble, the most charitable

Illus. George Whitfield, the great Calvinistic evangelist of the First Great Awakening, had a deep disagreement with John Wesley, the father of the Methodist church, over predestination. At the height of their disagreement, Whitefield was asked, "Do you think

you shall see John Wesley in heaven?” Whitefield answered, “No, I don’t.” The questioner must have felt shocked until Whitfield added with characteristic humility, “I believe Mr. Wesley shall be so close to the throne and I so far away that I don’t think I shall see him!”

I desire to see the kind of deep affection for the family of God that led people to kneel on the beach in prayer and weep for the Apostle Paul to develop here

3. A large part of that will be the hospitality and generosity described in vs. 13

II. Supernatural Hospitality and Generosity

Romans 12:13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

A. Paul’s Command: Pursue Generous Hospitality

1. The words imply a constant seeking of hospitality... a constant readiness for it, a disposition toward it
2. The Greek word for hospitality is literally “love for strangers” or “love for aliens”
3. Old Testament foundation:

Leviticus 19:33-34 'When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ 'The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

4. Strongest New Testament support: the Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25:34-35 " I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in

5. Deep concept: Our welcome in heaven depends on God’s love for strangers
 - a. We were aliens to God, outsiders, strangers, foreigners

Ephesians 2:12-13 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God

- b. God opened His home to us, welcomed us at His table, accepted us into His family

B. Hospitality in the New Testament

1. Basic concept: no other option when you traveled
 - a. There were far fewer inns or hotels
 - b. No Holiday Inn, no Motel 6 with Tom Beaudette “leavin’ the light on for ya”...no Marriot, certainly no Hyatts or Ritz Carltons
 - c. For the most part, travelers depended on hospitality to meet their needs
2. Christ’s first missionary instructions: Matthew 10
 - a. Christ Sent Apostles Out Depending on It

Matthew 10:11-13 "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. ¹² As you enter the home, give it your greeting. ¹³ If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.

- b. Christ promised eternal rewards to any who received them and cared for them... even if it was just a cup of cold water!!
3. Later the apostles totally depended on it
 - a. Peter stayed at Simon the Tanner’s home when he had the vision of the sheet with all the unclean animals that led to him preaching the gospel to Cornelius
 - b. Paul stayed at many guest homes... Acts 21 is full of hospitality for Paul & his traveling companions... Philip the evangelist, Mnason
 - c. Paul was staying at Gaius’s house when he wrote Romans!!!

Romans 16:23 Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

- d. John commended hospitality in 2 John and 3 John... as a matter of fact, I believe hospitality is THE KEY ISSUE... 2 John negatively... what kind of teachers (namely, false teachers) you should NOT have in your home, 3 John positively, thanking the elders for their hospitality to true teachers

3 John 1:5-8 Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶ They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. ⁸ We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.

4. Early churches were frequently house churches... those churches totally depended on private individuals' willingness to keep opening up their homes... Like Lydia in Philippi

Acts 16:15 *When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.*

5. Hospitality came to extend to anyone who opened his home for the sake of the Kingdom

1 Peter 4:9 *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

6. Church leaders were especially commanded to be hospitable... like the requirements for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1... both require HOSPITALITY
7. 1 Timothy 5: Widows could not be put on a support list if they weren't hospitable
8. The most intriguing case: Hebrews 13:2

Hebrews 13:2 *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*

C. Hospitality Today: Case Studies from the Negative and Positive Sides

1. One observer of American culture said this:

"You know what we get for our affluence? We get ISOLATION!"

Why would anyone want isolation? Because people are complicated and messy... so you can build walls to keep them out

Also we have become a very fluid society, where people no longer feel the need to reach out to newcomers in their communities because they are new themselves

This is especially true in churches, where people change membership so frequently and thus feel little sense of ownership about making visitors feel welcome

The result has been a sad abandonment of a culture of hospitality in the American church

2. Alexander Strauch's (*The Hospitality Commands*) sad experiences

- An elderly single woman had to travel more than an hour by bus to attend a small suburban church. Each week after the Sunday morning service, she would eat alone in a restaurant and then spend the entire afternoon in a park or library so that she could attend the evening service. She did this for four years. What left her with sour memories of this church was that in four years no one invited her home to eat a Sunday afternoon

meal or to rest. It wasn't until she announced she was leaving that an elderly woman invited her home for a meal on her final Sunday

- Strauch himself reported a similar experience: “At time I have traveled as long as two or three hours in order to preach at a church. In some instances when I finished speaking I was handed a check, invited to return, given many friendly handshakes, and bid a warm goodbye. But no one thought to invite me home for a meal, to provide rest before my long drive home, or to seek further fellowship with me after this Sunday evening service.”

3. More positively:

- a. We have seen and experienced incredible hospitality from members of FBC
- b. When our growing family first came to Durham, we stayed at the home of Tony and Susan Fisher... I will NEVER forget the love they showed us right from the beginning of our ministry here... except that Tony tried to brainwash my little girl Carolyn, who was all of two years old at the time, saying she was “Mr. Fisher’s girl”! But a small price to pay for the sweet fellowship we enjoyed
- c. Or during the ice storm of December, 2002, when many people were driven out of their homes by extended power outages, many FBC members took others in and cared for them... we had a delightful stay at the homes of Bob and Linda Hatcher, and Ralph and Jenny Sears
- d. One family, Stephen and Joyce Young made hospitality especially to undesirable unbelieving outsiders a major part of their ministry in Pennsylvania... they have continued that with Internationals here
- e. I have seen others regularly use meals to extend Christian love to us and others
- f. Others regularly open their homes to Christians... even to the point of having people stay with them for a year or more!!
- g. So... there is a wonderful spirit of hospitality at FBC; but it could develop even more than it has

D. Hospitality Well-Suited for FBC’s Ministries

1. Hospitality Well-Suited for **Fellowship**

- a. We are a commuter church, with a struggle to maintain fellowship and community... so hospitality will be HUGE for FBC’s future
- b. For us to develop deeper friendships, we have to go beyond merely the time we have here in this building

2. Hospitality Well-Suited for **Generosity**

- a. For us to share the good things God has given us with the Body of Christ, we must open our homes to each other

Romans 12:13 Share with God's people who are in need.

Perhaps verse 13 should be read all together... "Share with God's people who are in need BY practicing hospitality."

But the command to be supernaturally generous to the Body of Christ extends beyond mere hospitality... giving financially to the relief of Christian poor around the world is an excellent way to obey this command

But locally, hospitality is one of the best ways to do this

3. Hospitality Well-Suited for **Evangelism**

- a. The gospel is weighty cargo that has to travel over a sturdy bridge built by trust... while contact evangelism can be effective, friendship evangelism is even more so!
- b. Open up your home to unbelieving friends
- c. Hospitality evangelism
- d. Neighborhood bible studies
- e. Internationals!!!!
 - i) If EVER there was a connection to "I was a stranger and you invited me in", this is it
 - ii) Many internationals come from cultures where hospitality is regularly practiced, and they testify that they are stunned by the lack of openness by Americans... many have never been invited once to an American home, never once shared a meal at an American table
 - iii) If you are interested in hosting an international student, talk to me or Dave Follrod or anyone connected with the International Ministry
 - iv) One ministry avenue available to us is to host an international just as they enter the country before they get established at Duke... to have them stay with us for a week or so... WHAT AN INCREDIBLE and PRIME opportunity for hospitality evangelism!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- f. HOST ministry: Just being friendly to visitors here at the church... thinking about how to make this church a visitor friendly church

- i) Easter Sunday... clearing out central area of parking lot for guests
- ii) Tony Fisher will be recruiting people for HOST ministry trial run, just for Easter... to welcome these folks warmly and thinking about how

4. Hospitality Well-Suited for **Discipleship**

- a. Home fellowships: we host a home fellowship and the people who come never fail to thank us for opening their homes to us
- b. Older godly families modeling healthy family life for young
- c. One on one discipleship... things caught not taught

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

E. The Power of Hospitality

1. Stacy McDonald: Raising Maidens of Virtue
2. Chapter entitled "The Cheerful Voice of Hospitality"
3. Began with a personal testimony of how God used the hospitality of a Christian family to bring an unsaved father to faith in Christ
4. Notice the detail... notice how hospitality done well means thinking carefully ahead of time about the needs of your guest, and making them feel as though it is the greatest delight and privilege in the world to have them as a guest

Travel weary and hungry, our family arrived in town just before dark. My six-year old brother Thomas had fallen asleep upright in the back seat, hugging his bear. Papa peered at each house number trying to find the address for our friends the Millers.

"There it is," Mama said, "5526, the house with the geraniums by the mailbox!"

Mama carried the baby while I, being the oldest boy, helped Papa with the luggage. Thomas cuddled closer to his bear in the backseat. "Are we there yet?" he purred sleepily.

The scent of cinnamon and cloves drifted out to greet us as we stood on the porch. Suddenly the door flew open, and we were ushered in by a happy crowd of curly-blond Miller children.

"Here, let me carry that for you," they all seemed to say at once. The oldest daughter added, "Can I get you something to drink?" The eight year old Miller son proudly chirped, "Mama said you're sleepin' in my room, so I cleaned it up extra special!"

Mr. and Mrs. Miller met us in the doorway grinning. Mama hugged Mrs. Miller and whispered her thankfulness for good friends and warm welcomes, and Papa and Mr. Miller shook hands. Thomas smiled as the youngest Miller girl giggled and offered him a toy.

The Miller's home was warm and cozy, and **without a word, we somehow knew we were welcome.** Fresh fruit, cheese, and warm homemade bread were waiting for us in the parlor. The oldest Miller daughter served us herbal tea in little teacups...

The beautiful violin music that drifted through the house enhanced the conversation rather than suppressed it.

Mrs. Miller and her daughters served our family with joy and ease. It seemed so natural—as if they were doing what they were created to do.

I observed how Mr. Miller pulled back Mrs. Miller's chair before she sat, and I noticed a lump in my throat as he prayed over our meal at dinner with such passion and genuine gratefulness to his God.

Later that evening, we found our rooms carefully prepared with fresh herbs and flowers by the bedside, soft sheets and warm snuggly quilts on the beds. Floral-scented linen baskets complete with little shampoos, soaps, and a Bible sat on an old trunk in the corner.

As I slept under the warm comforter that night, the lavender potpourri stirred pleasant thoughts of our friends, the Millers. I wondered what it was that made me feel so warm and good whenever we were here.

The Millers were Christians, but I had met Christians before—the man screaming on television and asking for money was a Christian. And the lady who lives next door to us must be a Christian because she has one of those fish symbols on her car—and she handed me a gospel tract once—but she must not like being a Christian much because she never smiles. Mr. and Mrs. Miller seem to smile all the time. But Papa says the Millers are a different kind of Christian.

Papa says being around the Millers makes him consider his ways. Tonight I saw him sitting in the corner thumbing through the Bible the Millers left in our guest towel basket. I wonder if being at the Millers' house makes Papa feel sad inside instead of warm and good like it does me, because just as I was drifting off to sleep, I saw Mama kneeling beside Papa, and I could have sworn I heard him weeping." [Stacy McDonald, *Raising Maidens of Virtue*]

This kind of sensitive thoughtfulness is the gospel put on display

It is supernaturally powerful for setting a context for the sharing of the actual message of the gospel

III. Supernatural Joy in Trials

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

A. The Most Bitter Lesson

Michael Card, “Maranatha”: the word means “Come, Lord!” a song about the cry of an afflicted heart going through trials

“It’s certain that waiting’s the most bitter lesson, a believing heart has to learn.”

1. God has ordained that we wait here on earth for our reunion with Him
2. In that time, we are to be faithfully advancing the Kingdom of God
3. We are also to be growing in grace internally
4. Both of those infinite journeys involve suffering and pain
5. HOW we suffer, what kind of attitude we have in the trial is huge
6. God is calling to a supernatural joy, a supernatural patience, a supernatural faithfulness

B. Joyful in Hope

1. Hope is a major theme in the Book of Romans... but the ordinary kind of hope
2. Natural hope is a common and feeble thing
 - a. Excited child: “I hope the ballgame doesn’t get rained out!”
 - b. Unemployed person: “I hope I get the job I’m interviewing for”
 - c. A single person: “I hope I meet someone at church”
 - d. Nursing home: “I hope someone visits me today”

All are feeble because they are uncertain... many may not happen; we get used to disappointments

3. Biblical hope is different: a sure and certain blessing that is promised to believers based on the finished work of Christ

Romans 8:23-25 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

4. The center of it all: that someday we will be in heaven with Christ, glorious, in resurrection bodies, free forever from all death, mourning, crying and pain

5. This is the bedrock foundation of JOY... it never moves because it is based on the purposes and promises of God... His omnipotence is under your joy
6. Note: our hope is founded on doctrine... the ELEVEN CHAPTERS of doctrine that Paul gave us in Romans 1-11... the eternal purposes of God in Christ, unshakeable because of the sovereignty of God

Now we see the value of eleven chapters of solid Christian doctrine

Some practical minded people want to skip the doctrine and get immediately to practical advice miss the root of the beautiful flowers of hope

“Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus, to the church of Christ at Rome... Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Amen.” End of book!

Cut flower hope will wilt... hope rooted and grounded in the promises of God will survive any trial

C. Patient in Affliction

1. Longsuffering... not caving in and questioning; demanding from God an explanation for why you are suffering what you are
2. God sometimes drags us through the most horrendous circumstances imaginable and people are tempted to question God, to murmur against Him
3. They forget that God is the same one who will to crush His own Son and cause Him to suffer on the cross for us and for our salvation... He TORTURED HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON... His perfect Son in whom was all His delight... made Him scream in agony so that our sins could be atoned for
4. And we think God will not bring us through cancer or the death of a child or financial ruin or failure or unanswered prayer
5. Yet by His power He gives us a supernatural patience through the trial
6. I have seen this at work in our church... as several people with cancer have walked through that severe trial with unwavering trust in Christ
7. It was one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen in my life, and it strengthened my own hope
8. BUT it is supernatural... it cannot be faked or imitated... it comes directly from Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit

D. Faithful in Prayer

George Mueller, the great prayer warrior said it well, when he said, "The great fault of the children of God is, they do not continue in prayer; they do not go on praying; they do not persevere!")

This is a man who had over 50,000 specific answers to prayer, but who also prayed for over fifty years for something without ever receiving it!!

1. How quick we are to stop praying when we don't get our way
2. How easy it is for us to get discouraged and faint in prayer and stop
3. In Luke 18, Christ told parable after parable about prayer, teaching His disciples that they should always pray and never give up

Luke 18:1-7 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!" ⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

- a. The reason He tells this parable is that God will test our patience by not answering our prayers right away
- b. Praying faithfully is unnatural... so GIVING UP in prayer is the most natural thing in the world
- c. God is calling us to pray supernaturally... and that means being faithful in prayer over a long period of time, even when it seems God is not answering

Today we have considered three other aspects of the supernatural life God is calling on Christians to live

- **Supernatural Love for the Family of God**
- **Supernatural Hospitality and Generosity**
- **Supernatural Joy in Trials**

God has made power for this kind of life available through the shed blood of Christ and the Spirit of God

BUT only Christians can experience this... if you have never trusted in Christ, turn to him now... realize that this kind of supernatural life on earth can be yours... and even better, eternal life awaits you in God's presence.

TRUST CHRIST TODAY!!!