

The All-Encompassing Power of God: How the New Birth Affects Everything

John begins his book with the power of God in creation. In cp. 3 he introduces this power with Jesus' words to Nicodemus, "**You must be born again.**" This is the doctrine of the regeneration, the new birth. And really, the rest of John's Gospel shows this great power revealed in Jesus. And only by and through this power will anyone see the kingdom of God. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he prays that they (and us) would know "**what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places . . .**" (Eph. 1:19-20). With this in mind, I want us to give more thought to this truth, "**that we might know . . . the power of God** in everything we are and everything we do! So, in a very topical way, I want to explore this truth through in 2 parts: 1) Christ is the power of God and only in Him do we know and experience this power; 2) This power means that we have EVERYTHING we need for life and godliness.

1. Christ is the power of God and only in Him do we know and experience this power. We saw this last week in vv. 14-15 as Jesus links the new birth with himself. He says, "**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.**" I believe this is John's main purpose, to point All the Scriptures to Jesus as the power of God, and only by his power can anyone see the kingdom of God. (Let me say right from the beginning, Jesus is the ONLY way. He is the ONLY truth that leads to eternal life. He is the ONLY One who can give life. So trust him today! Look to him today! Christian, look to him in this sermon that your faith may be strengthened. Non-Christian, look to Jesus today that you may be saved!)

John begins his Gospel with this truth in 1:1-4: "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.**" And v. 14: "**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.**" It is SO IMPORTANT for us to get this truth. In the person of Jesus we find LIFE, and not just life as a created being. There is a distinction between God and his creation. But, in his deity, there is no distinction between the Father and the Son. There is no subordination in this regard! If you will have LIFE, it must come from the Son (also, in the same way it must come from the Father, and in the same way it must come from the Spirit).

This is why it is impossible to gain the power of God for eternal life if it does not come through the power of the Son. This is mysterious for sure, but life does not come down to us through a created being as says the JWs and the Mormons (and many others). Let's say you find a magical pond of water that gives you the ability to live as long as you drink it. OK, But, what if the pond goes dry? What if it runs out? What do you do then? You would die. I believe the Christ that the cults preach only has this kind of power, which on the surface "seems" to work, but in the end,

their Messiah does not have “LIFE” ETERNAL in himself. This ONLY comes from God. This means that ONLY the Son could lay down his life as an ACCEPTABLE sacrifice, able to take sinners all the way to heaven forever. This is why they preach a false gospel that has no power. The Lord Jesus we believe and of whom the Bible proclaims will always intercede for us, and his power will never run out because His power doesn’t merely “come from” God, He is God! (think on that as you speak to JWs and Mormons). The same can be said of any other religion; their power runs out. And, really, there is no power to save.

This is John’s point! Believe on Him! And if we keep reading John to the end, what do we find is the catalyst, or the proof, or the stamp of God upon this truth? It is the Resurrection! Let me read Paul’s words again from Eph. 1:19-23: **“And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”** Now, it is not that Jesus DID NOT have such power in Himself before the resurrection: HE DID (And this is John’s point). Nevertheless, it is his resurrection from the dead that proves it! It is God’s stamp upon the person and work of the Jesus! I think of Jesus’ words to his good friend, Martha, later in John, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”** (John 11:25-26). In Jesus we find POWER, ALL the power of God, the same essential power that rose Christ from the dead, the same power through which He is seated at the right hand of God! And, ONLY in HIM do we find and have and experience this power.

Let me repeat what I said last week. I recently heard and read a sermon of a pastor nearby who actually believes that some “Christians” have the Spirit while others do not! This is malarkey! If the power of God is not in you, the same power that rose Christ from the dead, you are not a Christian, you may be just a good ole boy from China Grove who is nice and does good works, etc. (For the power of God in the Son, see especially Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:4-11; Heb. 1:1-13).

Practically, the new birth is bound up with belief in the Lord Jesus. And know that even the demons believe; and they shudder in fear. My fear as a pastor for myself and for you is expressed in Paul’s words from 2 Tim. 3:5: **“having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power . . .”**

2. This Power Means We Have Everything We Need for Life and Godliness. The Bible, particularly the NT, is FULL of this truth. But, probably the most clear is found in 2 Pet. 1:3-4: **“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become**

partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.” There is SO much here that I cannot share this morning. But, this verse supports the power of the new birth to give us EVERYTHING we need for LIFE and GODLINESS. Now, I do not believe Peter is saying that we become “God” by becoming “partakers of the divine nature.” This would lead to some kind of panentheism where everything is God and God is everything. There has been and always will be a distinction between God and his creation. And though this is mysterious, I believe, in these verses, he is speaking about the power of the Holy Spirit who “dwells in us” in those who have been born again, those have been regenerated. This is none other than “union with Christ.” This means that the same power that rose Christ from the dead (the essential power of God) is the same power that dwells in us.

Again, there is a distinction between us and Jesus Christ concerning the Spirit. John tells us that Jesus is given the Spirit “without measure.” This is to say the same Spirit who is God, fills Jesus fully, in the same way God is Spirit. In John 3:34 we read: **“For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.”** In other words, we cannot “measure” God as to how full He is in Himself. He is “without measure.” And the Son has the Spirit “without measure.” In other words, He is God!

Now, what about us? Well, we are not given the Spirit without measure in this regard. But, God gives the Spirit to us in fullness. I think this is in reference to the OT. The Holy Spirit came upon prophets, priest, kings, etc., and not upon others. But, this is not so in the New Covenant. All of God’s people have the Spirit. Now, there are other ways of speaking as to “how” the Spirit works in different ways in our lives. But, those who have been born again have the Spirit. This is the great blessing of the New Covenant! And the giving of the Spirit flows down to us in the new covenant because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. So, in this way, we are given all the power we need to accomplish the purpose of God as we live in this sinful world.

Let me read some verses that support this truth, the essential power of the new birth.

In Col. 1:9-14 Paul says: **“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

And in vv. 27-29 we read: **“To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”** (Quick application: Life is still a struggle. We struggle in this

sinful world where the devil still works and death is all around us. – Paul likens this to a wrestling match.)

Titus 2:4-7: **“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”**

On and on we can go. Let me end with some applications

Application: This power does not come down to us except through the person and work of Jesus Christ (This is what Paul describes as the power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). The person and work of Christ takes care of our standing before God “being justified by his grace” and the power that now lives in us. The new birth in Christ is connected to both our justification and our sanctification!)

Application: We are different! Why? It is the power of God unto salvation for those who believe . . . (Rom. 1:16). This means you are different kind of father. You are a different kind of mother. You are a different kind of worker. You are a different kind of child in your household. Paul says it this way in Rom. 8:1-11: **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”**

Application: We understand what is true. See 1 Cor. 2:14-16 **“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”**

Application: The giving of the Holy Spirit is a down payment that looks forward to the final resurrection and the new heavens and new earth.

Brothers and sisters your power to live the Christian life comes down to you from the person and work of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. And, you have everything you need for life and godliness.