

# PLUG INTO GOD'S POWER FOR TODAY

*An exploration of the amazing power that God makes available to believers through His Grace*

by John Aldworth

## EMPOWERMENT FOR THE CHRISTIAN TODAY

Empowerment! What an “in” word it is. To the athlete it's the extra energy he craves for; to the educated it's the power knowledge gives; to the social worker it's that longed for moment when their clients realise that only they can get themselves out of the mess they are in – and that others cannot do it for them.

Then there's the empowerment that's talked of in Christian circles. “Equipped, empowered, ablaze for His glory,” one Pentecostal church advert exults. Sounds great but what do they really mean? Answer: That they've been “baptised in the Holy Ghost”, speak in tongues and have received spiritual gifts they can use to heal the sick, know secrets by supernatural means and prophesy future events unrecorded in scripture.

Supposedly all this should really empower them but does it? For sure, some babble a few syllables in tongues, some utter great sounding words of “prophecy” and others get the shakes or fall to the floor (in my view a demonic, psychic impression, rather than the work of the Holy Spirit). But here's the rub. No matter how much “Holy Ghost power” a Pentecostalist supposedly receives, you'll find he's always crying out for more. I know. I used to be one.

## SPIRITUAL DRYNESS IN PENTECOSTALISM

Randy Clark was a pastor in John Wimber's Vineyard movement of signs and wonders when that supposedly was the best thing since sliced bread. But he gave it up to become a leading figure in the Toronto Laughing Revival. “I was so dry for years before self-proclaimed “Holy Ghost bartender” Rodney Howard Brown zapped me afresh that I thought the Lord had given up on me. Nothing was happening,” he says.

Indeed spiritual dryness is the common complaint of all involved in Pentecostal or charismatic experience, especially the ministers. Just listen to them sing or pray. The cry is always for “a fresh anointing”, for “more of the Spirit, for a miracle that rarely seems to happen. “A touch (supposedly) from the Lord” may seem so “real” on Sunday but it's gone Monday and then it's back to the dreary round of waiting and hoping that some day, some time, the Spirit will “fall afresh on me”.

## THE SPIRITUAL FOUNTAIN IN GRACE

How different it is for the non-Pentecostal, non-charismatic grace believer who simply trusts God's word rightly divided and knows he or she has been baptised by the Holy Spirit into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Importantly, this is not the same baptism as the "baptism with the Holy Ghost" Jesus spoke of in Acts 1:5. The "*baptism by the Spirit*" is into Christ's death and into his (spiritual) body, Romans 6:3, 1 Cor. 12:13) and such believers have been made to "*drink into One Spirit*", not several (and who knows from where) as in Pentecostal experience.

Far from needing a new anointing such grace believers are very happy with one they've got (2 Cor. 12:13). Why? Because, it's constantly with them 24/7 for all of their life. Romans 8:9 teaches, "... *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His*". So we dare not be without His Spirit, even for a second. Thank God grace believers belong to Christ at all times, the Spirit dwells within and never leaves us.

What's more, unlike those who pretend to have a Pentecostal power they actually don't possess - since God long ago set aside such manifestations – we grace believers are truly empowered by God Himself with power that really works. God's Word says so. Romans 1:16 states that the "*gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*". Please note, it says "is", not "was".

This gospel of grace has enough power to save every one on the planet should they believe but God promises even more power to those who trust His Word and "*rightly divide it*" ( 2 Tim. 2:15).

## MORE POWER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE

For example, in Eph. 1:19 Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles speaks of the "*exceeding greatness of His (God's) power to us who believe*". Think about it. He is saying that however "great" you imagine God's power is toward us believers, in fact it is far, far greater. We know that is true because in Eph. 3:20 we learn that that God the Father is "*able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*" – and look out, here it comes – "*according to the POWER that works within us*".

Believer, God says you've got more POWER at work in you than you could ever imagine, pray for or dream about – and it's there with a Pentecostalist laying a single finger, let alone his hands on you.

What's more both God the Father and the Apostle Paul want you to try it out – to see how it works through you and for you – just so that you know how great that

POWER is within you. Where do you get that from, do I hear you ask? I get it from Eph. 1:7 where Paul; prays:

*“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (the Father):*

*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that YE MAY KNOW what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*

*And what is the EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER to usward who believe, according to the WORKING OF HIS MIGHTY POWER, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,*

*Far above all principality, might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but in the world which is to come. And hath put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”*

Do you see how this POWER works? In answer to the Apostle Paul’s prayer the Father Himself gives us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him – Him being the Father Himself. The result of that prayer is that the “eyes of your understanding” are opened so you can KNOW three things:

- 1. The HOPE of His (that is the Father’s) calling.**
- 2. The RICHES of the glory of His (that is, the Father’s) inheritance in the saints.**
- 3. The EXCEEDING GREATNESS of His (that is the Father’s) POWER to usward who BELIEVE.**

And that’s not all. This POWER that is EXCEEDING GREAT is *according to the WORKING of His MIGHTY POWER*. Note well, this is not just God’s POWER at work. That would be stupendous enough but this POWER is more. It is God’s MIGHTY POWER at work IN US who believe.

## THE GREATEST POWER OF ALL

And even that is not all. Actually this MIGHTY POWER of God is at work in us in the same way it worked back when God exerted more of His POWER than on any other occasion we know of from Scripture. That, of course, was when He raised His precious Son Jesus Christ from the death which He died when He bore our sin on the cross. You see, however much POWER it took to create the heavens and the earth – and that was heaps – it took much more to raise Christ

from His death for our sin. It is this EXCEEDING GREAT POWER which the Father wants you and me to know as a real experience in our lives.

Look, how much spiritual POWER do you personally need? However much it is God has more. More POWER than the supposed Big Bang scientists falsely claim exploded the universe into being. Far more bang in fact than a billion supernovae exploding at once. And that EXCEEDING GREAT POWER needs to be as powerful as that because it is the very POWER of the new creation. Yes, believer, it takes much more of God's POWER to conform us to the image of God's son (Rom. 8:29) and make us a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) than it did to bring a billion stars unto being.

This POWER RAISED Christ when He had been crushed to death by our sin and God's punishment for it that He took on our behalf. From death God the Father's MIGHTY POWER lifted Him high into the heavenlies. Then this POWER placed Him higher still, far above all principality, power, might and any name in either this world or the world to come (Eph. 1:21-22). That means any evil power that is in you or comes against you when you seek to do God's will is powerless to prevent, alter or hinder anything God through His MIGHTY POWER does in your life.

This POWER has also made Him Head over all things to us, His Church. No wonder Paul says: "*We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*" (Rom. 8:37).

## MADE ALIVE IN HIS POWER

It is through this POWER, flowing from the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we have been made alive. What's more we have Christ Himself alive in us "*the hope of glory*", the inner man who cannot sin. However, as Paul says, we have this "*treasure in earthen vessels, so that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us*" (2 Cor. 4:7).

Do you get it? There is more enough POWER from God to give us hope (and in the Bible that means "certainty", see Heb. 6:11) that we will arrive in GLORY. However, the POWER, like the GLORY, must be of God and not of us.

Amazing grace, isn't it? And yet, perhaps, like me you sometimes feel all this is a little too good to be true? After all, here I am, still a sinner, still struggling with some aspects of life, not to mention godliness. Why is that when so much of God's POWER is available, we sometimes feel very defeated by sin and Satan, rather than rejoicing in the scriptural fact that that in Christ we are "*more than conquerors*" (Rom. 8:37)?

## POWER FOR OUR SPECIAL NEEDS

Ah, perhaps like me, you're a "special case", one that struggles with sin, one that needs further empowering to see all that God has done and is doing for you. If so, then I have good news for you.

You see, amazingly, God's word offers even MORE of God's POWER to meet the need in such a case. That's right, there's further POWER over and above all that we've talked about thus far and it's there especially to meet the needs of poor sinners such as you and I. To find it we go to Eph. 3:14-16). Paul writes:

*"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in earth and heaven is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be STRENGTHENED with MIGHT by His Spirit in the INNER MAN: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ..."*

Here are some weak believers. Yes, they are saved. Yes, they have been baptised by the Holy Spirit into His (Christ's) Body. They've experienced God the Father's saving and raising power and, yes, they have each put on the "new man" (Eph, 4:24) who is holy, that is Christ Himself dwelling by His Spirit within. But they need strengthening to stand in the battle for truth – don't we all? That is precisely why Paul asks the Father to strengthen us with MIGHT by His SPIRIT in the INNER MAN.

You see the Apostle knows who he is ministering to us Gentiles. He knows what we are like. He knows, and God knows, we can receive the benefits of the wonderful "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), yet still fail to "grow up into Him in all things" (Eph. 4:15).

## HOW TO BE STRONG THOUGH WEAK

Why is it we don't fully grow up? Answer: Because we are weak. Paul found the answer to this problem was not to pretend to be strong (as the Pentecostal splab it and grab it brigade would have us do), but to admit he was weak. Christ told Paul, "my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul's response: "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities (weaknesses) that the power of Christ may rest on me."

Now, here in Eph.3:14-16 Paul prays that we weak believers may be strengthened with (Christ's) MIGHT in the inner man. We really do need strengthening with that special POWER of God, His EXCEEDING GREAT MIGHT. And where do we need strengthening? Not in our flesh but, oddly enough right in the INNER MAN where you might think such POWER was needed least, since the inner "hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4) is said to be holy and righteous.

## POWER FLOWING FROM THE INNER MAN

Ah, but it is precisely in the out working (working out) of that inner man through our daily thoughts and deeds that we Gentiles have such difficulty<sup>7</sup>. Which is why God, speaking through the Apostle Paul, knows and prescribes what is best for us – strengthening with His MIGHT in the inner man.

Our inner man must become stronger, not in and of himself - he couldn't, he doesn't need to – but in the effect he has upon and in our lives.

That is why Paul prays especially prays for you and for me, grace-saved believers, that we might be STRENGTHENED with MIGHT by His (the Father's) Spirit in the inner man.

Notice that it is the Father's SPIRIT that strengthens us just as it is His POWER that is at work within us.

**Let's take Him at his word and believe that, truly, in so many ways we are hugely empowered by Him.**