

## **Watchman Nee – Latent Power Of The Soul - The Christian and Psychic Force - Extract**

### **Four Facts**

(1) There is in Adam an almost unlimited power, a near miraculous ability. This we call soul power. Modern psychic researchers have proved the existence of such ability within man. Since the discovery of Mesmer in 1778 all kinds of latent power have been exhibited—whether expressed psychically or religiously. These are but the release of man's soul force. We should not forget that these powers of the soul were in man before his fall but became latent in him afterwards.

(2) Satan desires to control man's latent soul power. He is well aware that there is this power in man's soul which is capable of doing many things. He therefore wishes to bring it under his control instead of God's. Satan wants to use it for his own purpose. The 30 The Latent Power of The Soul

purpose of his tempting Adam and Eve in the garden was to gain control of their soul power.

I have frequently spoken on the spiritual meanings of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. The meaning of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is independence, the taking of independent action. The tree of life, though, signifies dependence or reliance on God. The significance of this tree further tells us that Adam's original life is but a human life, and that therefore he needs to depend on God and receive God's life in order to live. But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil discloses that man does not need to depend on God but he can work and live and bear fruit all by himself. Why do I bring up these matters? Simply to show you the cause of Adam and Eve's fall. If we can release Adam's latent power we too may work wonders. But are we permitted to do so?

Satan knew there was such wonder-working strength in man, hence he tempted man to declare his independence from God. The fall in the Edenic garden was none other than man taking independent action, separating himself from God. Upon learning the story of the fall in the garden, we can perceive what the purpose of Satan was. He aimed at gaining the soul of man. And when man fell, his original ability and miraculous strength all fell into Satan's hand.

(3) Today Satan desires to release and display the latent power of the soul. As soon as man fell, God imprisoned man's psychic powers in his flesh. His many powers became confined and hidden in the flesh as a latent force—present but inactive. After the fall, all which belongs to the soul comes under the control and bondage of that which belongs to the flesh. All psychological forces are thus governed by physiological forces. Satan's objective is to liberate man's soul power through the breakdown of the outer shell of his flesh so as to free his soul from its fleshly bonds, thereby manifesting his latent power. This is what Revelation 18.13 means by making

merchandise of men's souls. Indeed, man's soul has become one of the many items of the enemy's commodities. The enemy desires especially to have man's psychological abilities as his merchandise.

At the end of the age, particularly during the present moment, Satan's intention is to carry through what he at the beginning aimed at in the garden of Eden. Although he initiated the work of controlling man's soul in the garden, he had not fully succeeded. For after his fall, man's whole being, including his soul power, came under the flesh. In other words, man's psychological forces came under the dominion of his physiological forces. The enemy failed to make use of man's soul power; accordingly his plan was foiled.

Throughout these thousands of years, Satan has been exerting himself to influence men into expressing their latent power. He has found, now and then, here and there, persons from whom he succeeds in drawing out their soul force. These have become wonder-working religious leaders of the ages. But in the last hundred years, since the discovery of Mesmer in parapsychology, many new discoveries of psychic phenomena have followed. All these are due to but one reason: the enemy is attempting to finish his previously unsuccessful work. He intends to release all the latent powers of men. This is his singular purpose which he has been cultivating for thousands of years. This is why he trades in the souls of men besides such merchandise as gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, and cattle and horses. As a matter of fact, he has exerted his utmost strength to obtain this special commodity.

(4) How does Satan make use of these latent powers? What are the various advantages for him?

(a) He will be able to fulfill his original promise he made to man that "ye shall be as God". In their ability to work so many wonders, men will consider themselves as gods, and worship not God but themselves. 31 32 The Latent Power of The Soul

(b) He will confuse God's miracles. He wishes mankind to believe that all the miracles in the Bible are but psychological in their origin, thus lowering their value. He wants men to think that they are able to do whatever the Lord Jesus did.

(c) He will confound the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in man through the human spirit, but now Satan forges in man's soul many phenomena similar to the workings of the Holy Spirit, causing man to experience false repentance, false salvation, false regeneration, false revival, false joy, and other counterfeits of Holy Spirit experiences.

(d) He will use man as his instrument for his final resistance against God's plan in this last age. The Holy Spirit is God's miracle-working power; but man's soul is Satan's wonder-working power. The last three years and a half (during the great tribulation) will be a period of great wonders performed by man's soul under Satan's direction.

In summary, then, we see that (1) all these miraculous powers are already in Adam, (2) Satan's objective is to control these powers, (3) in the end time Satan is, and will continue to be, especially engaged in manifesting these powers, and (4) this is his attempt to finish his earlier unsuccessful task.

### **The Point of Difference in the Workings of God and Satan**

How should we guard against deception? We need to discern what is God's operation and what is the enemy's operation, what work is done by the Holy Spirit and what work is done by the evil spirit. All the works of the Holy Spirit are done through man's spirit; but the works of the enemy are all done through man's soul. The Holy Spirit moves the human spirit while the enemy spirit moves the human soul. This is the basic point of difference between the operations of

God and those of the enemy. God's work is initiated by the Holy Spirit, but the enemy's work is commenced in man's soul.

Because of the fall, our human spirit is dead and so cannot communicate with God. At the time we believe in the Lord Jesus we are born again. What is meant by being saved or born again? This is not just a matter of terminology; a real organic change has occurred in us. When we trust in the Lord Jesus, God puts His life into our spirit and quickens it. Just as man's spirit is substantial, so too this new spirit which God puts in us is substantial.

John 3.6 tells us what new birth is. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Ezekiel too informs us: "A new spirit will I (God) put within you" (36.26). Hence in regeneration we get a new spirit. On one occasion the Lord Jesus said: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John 6.63). Our life and work must therefore all be within the scope of the spirit. When God uses us He usually works in and through our spirit. "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5.18) indicates that this new spirit of ours should be filled with the Holy Spirit. In other words, God fills our spirit with His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit works in our spirit; but the evil spirit operates in our soul. Satan can only operate in the soul and by the power of the soul. Satan has no way to commence his work in man's spirit; his working is restricted to the soul. What he has been doing for the past five or six thousand years he is presently doing and will continue to do in the future. Why is it that Satan seems to be as omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient as God? For no other reason than what he is able to do with man's soul power. We may say that while the Holy Spirit is the power of God, man's soul appears to be the power of Satan.

How unfortunate that many people are ignorant of the fact that the many ascetic practices, breathings, and abstract meditations of 33 34 The Latent Power of The Soul

Buddhism and Taoism, the hypnotism of western Europe, and the numerous wonders seen in psychic researches are only the manifestations of the latent power of man's soul. They do not realize how mighty is the power of the soul.

Brothers and sisters, let us not consider this as a minor problem nor dismiss it as a research for scholars. It actually has profound effects upon us.

### **The Two Sides of Soul Power**

According to the Bible, the latent power of the soul seems to include two types. This parallels the classification seen from the psychological standpoint. We confess that we are unable to divide these two types neatly; all we can say is that there seems to be two different types in the soul's latent power: one seems to be the ordinary kind while the other seems to be the miraculous kind; one seems to be natural, the other seems to be supernatural; one seems to be humanly comprehensible, the other seems to be beyond human comprehension.

The term "mind" in psychology is broader in its meaning than that used in the Bible. What the psychologists mean by the "mind" or the "heart" includes two parts: consciousness and sub-consciousness. The subconscious side is what we call the miraculous part of the power of the soul. Though psychologists make the distinction between consciousness and sub-consciousness, they can hardly separate them. They only classify the more common psychical manifestations as belonging to the first type—that of consciousness, whereas they group the extraordinary or miraculous manifestations under the second category—that of sub-consciousness. We usually include only those common manifestations within the scope of the soul, not knowing that the strange and miraculous manifestation is also of the soul, though manifestations of this type are more in the realm of the subconscious. Owing to various degrees of latent power

in individual souls, some men exhibit phenomena more within the first type; while others, more within the second type.

All who serve the Lord ought to pay special attention to this point, otherwise they will get carried away by miraculous powers while trying to help people. Let me reiterate the difference between soul and spirit: Adam's fallen soul belongs to the old creation; but the regenerated spirit is the new creation. God works with man's spirit, for this is his regenerated life, his new creation. Satan, on the other hand, builds with man's soul—that is, the fallen soul in Adam. He can only use the old creation because the regenerated life in the new creation does not sin.

### **What Satan Is Doing in the Church Today**

How does Satan operate through man's soul and work with its latent psychical power? We have already given many examples in Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, parapsychology, and so forth. Let us now illustrate with some instances showing how Satan will use man's soul in spiritual things. This will help the Christian to discern what is of God and what is of the enemy, and also to know how God uses man's spirit whereas Satan uses man's soul.

### **Prayer**

The prayers in the Bible are intelligent and not silly. When the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, His first words are: "Our Father who art in heaven". He teaches us to pray to our Father in heaven, but we Christians often pray to the God in our room. Our prayer should be offered to the heavenly Father for Him to hear. God wants us to send our prayers to heaven by faith, regardless if our feeling be good or bad, or even if there be no feeling. If you pray to, and expect to be heard by, the God in your room, I am afraid you will receive many strange feelings and miraculous experiences and visions from the 35 36 The Latent Power of The Soul

God in your room. These are given to you by Satan, and whatever you receive from Satan belongs either to consciousness or sub-consciousness.

Someone may not pray to the God in his room. He may direct his prayers instead towards the person for whom he prays. This too is most dangerous. Suppose you have a friend who is over two thousand miles away from you. You pray for him, asking God, as the case might be, to either revive him in the Word or to save him. Instead of directing your prayer towards God, you concentrate on your thought, your expectation, and your wish and send them out to your friend as a force. Your prayer is like a bow which shoots your thought, desire and wish as arrows towards your friend. He will be so oppressed by this force that he will do exactly what you have asked for. You may think your prayer is answered. But let me tell you, it is not God who answers your prayer, for you have not prayed to Him. It is merely an answer to a prayer which you directed towards your friend.

Someone claims his prayer is answered because, says he, "I have piled prayers on my friend." Indeed, for you prayed towards him, not towards God. Your prayer is answered, but not by God. Even though you do not know hypnosis, what you have secretly done has fulfilled the law of hypnotism. You have released your psychic force to perform this act.

Why is this so? Because you have not prayed to the God in heaven; instead your prayers are projected towards, piled upon, and laid siege to, the person for whom you pray. In appearance you are praying, but in actuality you are oppressing that person with your psychic power. If you use your soul force in praying for a certain one—say you pray that he should be at least disciplined if not punished—the prayer of your soul force will dart out at him and he will accordingly be sick. This is a fixed principle of the soul. It is as

sure as the fact that a person will be scorched if he thrusts his finger into fire.

For this reason, we should not pray a prayer that asks that a person be punished if he does not do what is expected of him. Such prayer will cause him to suffer, and thus make the one who prayed such a prayer the instigator of his woe. If we pray, we should pray to God and not towards man. I personally have experienced the ill-effect of such prayer. Several years ago I was sick for over a year. This was due to the prayers of five or six persons being piled upon me. The more they prayed, the weaker I became. Finally I discovered the cause. I began to resist such prayers, asking God to disengage me from what they had prayed for. And so I got well. In this connection, let me quote from a letter written by a believer:

I have just come through a terrible onslaught of the enemy. Hemorrhage, heart affection, panting and exhaustion. My whole body is in a state of collapse. It suddenly burst upon me while at prayer to pray against all psychic power exercised upon me by (psychic) 'prayer'. By faith in the power of the Blood of Christ, I cut myself off from it, and the result was remarkable. Instantly my breathing became normal, the hemorrhage stopped, exhaustion vanished, all pain fled, and life came back into my body. I have been refreshed and invigorated ever since. God let me know in confirmation of this deliverance, that my condition was the effect of a group of deceived souls, who are in opposition to me, 'praying' about me! God had used me to the deliverance of two of them, but the rest are in an awful pit .... \*

\*Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis, Soul and Spirit. Poole, Dorset, England, Overcomer Literature Trust, 1968?, p.58. Also available in the United States from Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, Pa. 37 38 The Latent Power of The Soul

## **Power for Service**

If one who is experienced in the Lord is present at a revival meeting, he can tell whether the speaker is using soulical or spiritual power. Once a friend of mine told me how powerful a certain preacher was. As I had never before met this preacher, I said I dare not judge. But I did write a few words on a notebook and gave it to my friend. I wrote: "Full of power but what power?" This friend was not as advanced in the Lord as was his wife. He did not understand what I had written. So he turned to ask his wife. After reading the note, she laughingly admitted, "This is indeed a real problem. What power is that preacher filled with?" Once a brother among us observed that whether someone had power or not could not be judged by how hard he was able to pound the pulpit. We need to discern in a meeting if a person's power is psychical or spiritual. ...

this will merely be natural; it is not spiritual at all. Many mistake Christianity to be a kind of psychic phenomenon as though it belongs to the domain of psychology. We really cannot blame them, because we believers make the mistake first. Unless the power of God draws your parents or your children, your natural attraction—however great it may be—is of no avail. Even if you could draw them with your dynamic force, what, if anything, is really gained?

### **Peace and Joy**

What is the highest attainment in Christianity? That of complete union with God and total loss of self. In modern psychology there is also the so-called union of man with the invisible “mind” so as to cause him to lose his identity. This appears to be akin to Christianity, though in reality these two are far apart. The popular Dr. Frank Buchman (Oxford Group movement) advocated this kind of psychology. One of his teachings concerned meditation. He reckoned that meditation was all that was necessary for communication between man and God. He did not ask people to read the Bible at early morn; he only asked them to meditate and then to pray. The first thought which comes after prayer, he proclaimed, is that thought which is given you by God. And so you must live through the day according to that thought. Who would ever think that this is but another type of silent sitting or abstract meditation? What is the effect of such meditation? You will be told that it will make you most peaceful and joyous. If you quietly direct your thought on whatever thing it may be for an hour, you too will get what is called peace and joy. Even if you meditate abstractly for one hour on no thought at all, you will still not fail to obtain this so-called peace and joy.

The meditations of many people are simply a kind of psychic operation. Not so with the Christian faith. We need not meditate on God, for we already have God’s life. We can know Him in our 41 42 The Latent Power of The Soul

intuition, regardless what our feeling may be. We have within us an intuitive guidance to the knowledge of God. In addition we have the word of God. Whatever His word says, we believe. If we have faith, we can disregard feeling. Herein lie the differences between Christian faith and psychology.

### **Wonders**

Let us look at wonders. I personally am not antagonistic to them. I have seen with my own eyes cases of instantaneous divine healing. Some people profess they can heal diseases. We do not oppose healing, we only contend with erroneous ways of healing. Some ask me if I oppose speaking in tongues. Certainly not, though I do question tongues which are obtained through faulty means. As to visions and dreams, I too have seen great light. We acknowledge that there are such things in the Bible. But I do resist visions and dreams which are obtained through unlawful means.

The Bible speaks of the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil. Some, however, in laying hands on another's head, rub forcibly the back of the person's brain or his neck and keep on asking how that person feels. Naturally when he is massaged, his neck will feel heated up. This is such a low trick that even the hypnotists reject using it. We know that at the back of our brain is a big nerve which extends into the vertebrae. The one who massages may not realize that this is a kind of hypnosis. The one who is being massaged may sense a current of warmth passing through his vertebrae and may even be healed. Yet it is but the manifestation of the latent psychical power of man. In spite of his getting well, I cannot recognize it as divine healing.

### **Spirit-Baptism**

Let us talk about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. When I was in Shantung this time, I too told people to seek for it. Nevertheless, I do not approve of the shutting in of many people into a small room for several days' fasting, praying, and chorus singing. Should people do such a thing, it will not take too long for them to have their brain dazed, the will to be turned passive, and their lips to be made to utter strange and incoherent sounds or tongues. And in this way shall their latent power be released.

In a meeting for seeking Spirit-baptism, people will keep shouting hallelujah for thousands of times. Eventually, their brain will grow dull, their mind becomes paralyzed, and they begin to see visions. How can you consider this as Spirit-baptism? It is but soul-baptism. What they receive is not the power of the Holy Spirit; it is instead soul force, the manifestation of the latent power of the soul. It comes from human exercise, not from the enduement of God. This is not the proper way for seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Yet people are still coaching others in this way, a way they learn not at God's instruction but by their own past experiences.

Some may ask, after reading this, "According to what you say, is it true that there are no real miracles?" Of course there are. We give thanks to God for all the miracles which come from Him. Nonetheless, we need to discern that if a miracle does not come from God, it is performed by the latent psychical power of man. When I was in Shantung I heard of a woman, palsied for many years, being completely healed. If her healing was truly of God, I would thank Him for her.

### **Knowing Psychic Force**

Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Church of Christ, Scientist, denied that there were death, sickness and pain; yet she died. 43 44 The Latent Power of The Soul

However, the Church of Christ, Scientist outlives her and continues on prosperously. They still give assent to the notion that if a sick person believes he is not sick, he will feel no pain; if a dying person believes he will not die, he will not die. As a consequence, many people are healed. Their propagators merely try to strengthen man's psychic force for the relief of physical ailment. Through the release of man's latent power of the soul, bodily weakness is overcome.

Because of the development of the soul's latent force, wonders are increasing nowadays. Of these wonders, many are highly supernatural and miraculous. Yet all these are only the manifestations of the latent power of the soul. Though I am no prophet, I have read books on prophecy. I learn that hereafter soul's latent power will have greater manifestations. For in the last days the enemy will seize upon man's psychic force to fulfill his work. If he succeeds in seizing this power, he will be able to do great wonders.

There are two classes of people who hold to two extremes respectively. One class insists there is no wonder. When they hear about wonders such as divine healing, they refuse to listen. Another class lays stress on wonders so much that they do not care from what source come these wonders—from God or from the enemy. Today we should be careful not to bend to either extreme. Each time we see or hear of a wonder performed we must ask, Is this God's doing or the enemy's? Is it done by the Holy Spirit of God or by the law of human psychology?

Today we should use our abilities—such as that of the mind, the will and the emotion—to do things, but we ought not express the latent power that is in our soul. The mind, emotion and will are man's psychic organs which he cannot help but use. For if man does not use them the evil spirit will take over their usage. However, if man desires to use the latent power behind these abilities, the evil spirit will begin to give him all kinds of counterfeit miracles. All works done by the soul and its psychic law are counterfeits. Only

what is done by the power of the Holy Spirit is real. The Holy Spirit has His own law of operation. For it is stated in Romans 8.2, "the law of the Spirit of life". Thank God, the Holy Spirit is real, and the law of the Holy Spirit is factual. Wonders performed according to the law of the Holy Spirit come from God.

It is extremely difficult for Moslems to believe in the Lord Jesus. There are therefore comparatively few who become Christians. Now how do the Moslems pray? Three times every day they do so in their mosques. They say that if anything needs to be done, pray in one accord with tens of thousands of people. "Consider the mass of Mahomedans at prayer in the great Jumna Mosque of Delhi," writes Mrs. Penn-Lewis, "where an hundred thousand followers of Mahomet assemble inside the Mosque, with a still larger crowd engaged in prayer outside." For what were they praying? In unison they shouted that they wanted Turkey revived and freed from the domination of the white race. Their psychic force gained the victory. "It is sufficient," continues Mrs. Penn-Lewis, "to point to the revision of the Treaty of Sevres, under which all that was lost to Turkey had to be restored. A greater triumph of one Eastern nation over all Western nations put together, cannot be imagined. The explanation given, and believed in by millions in India, is expressed in the word 'soul-force'."\* Unfortunately the prayers of many Christians are not answered by God but are attained by the projection of the latent power of their soul. They accomplish their goals in much the same way as the Moslems.

Look now at the powers displayed in Hinduism. Some Hindus can walk on fire without being scorched. And this is not a fake. They walk on fire, and not just a few steps, but across a long course with

\*Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis, Spirit and Soul. Poole, Dorset, England, Overcomer Literature Trust, 1968?, p.56. Also available in the United States from Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, Pa. 45 46 The Latent Power of The Soul

their feet treading on red-hot iron; yet they are not hurt. Some of them can lie on beds with nails pointed up. (Naturally, those whom they consider beginners cannot bear such things and will feel pain and hurt.) This too is a matter of the development of psychic power. How disastrous for believers to perform wonders with the same power which the Hindus use.

Very often in meetings Christians can sense a sort of power pressing in on them, or even at times of prayer and Bible reading they may feel oppressed without any reason. All these come from Satan who uses psychic forces to depress us or to assault us. Experienced Christians all over the world are aware of the especially severe attacks of the enemy at the end of this age. Since the whole atmosphere of the world seems to be heavily charged with psychic force, we need to hide ourselves under the Lord's precious blood and be protected by it.

While listening to a sermon in a huge cathedral, you can sense almost instantly if soul power is in operation—whether there is something present which seems to be inciting you. Although the preacher may announce that some people have repented and have been saved, you need to consider the consequences for those proclaimed to be saved. For there has been the mixing in of improper power into the work. If the power has come from God—which is that of God's Spirit—you would have felt light and clear. But psychic force as used by the enemy is aroused by the presence of a big crowd. May we be able to discern the difference lest we too be deceived.

The time is now come. Satan is exciting all his energies and using all kinds of means to stir up the latent power of the soul in religionists, mental scientists, and even Christians. Such is the fact before us.