

' the Son Can Do Nothing of Himself '

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

The sermon emphasizes the importance of dependence on God and the danger of soul-force and psychic powers in our Christian lives.

Scripture: John 6:44, John 6:53

Topics: "Spiritual Discernment", "Reliance on the Holy Spirit"

Description

Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasizes the distinction between 'soul-force' and 'spirit-force', explaining that true spiritual power originates from the Holy Spirit and not from the flesh. She warns against the dangers of relying on psychic forces that masquerade as spiritual gifts, urging believers to depend solely on the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment. Penn-Lewis highlights that Jesus Himself stated, 'The Son can do nothing of Himself', illustrating the necessity of divine reliance in all actions. The sermon calls for a careful examination of one's spiritual practices to ensure they are rooted in the Spirit rather than in the soul's natural abilities. Ultimately, she encourages believers to seek a renewed mind and discernment to navigate the complexities of spiritual life.

Transcript

The meaning of " soul-force " can be briefly defined as that which has its origin in the soul, and " spirit force " as that which has its origin in the spirit. The soul is the medium for the outworking of both. Soul-force is manifested through the faculties of the soul, and spirit force is manifested through the faculties of the soul likewise. Let me try to explain it crudely thus. Draw three sections, one above the other, and mark the top one " spirit ", the centre one " soul ", and the lowest one " body ". Then draw an arrow passing down from the "spirit " into the soul, and then outward. This suggests the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, passing down and out through the faculties of the soul. Or draw an arrow going up from the " body " section into the soul, and out through the faculties of the soul. In the first you have spirit-force coming from God energizing the soul-and in the second you have " soul-force ", or power arising from the flesh into the soul and out. The " soul ", as the central compartment, is the medium for both " spirit " and " soul " force, and we can only tell which force is in action by its fruits. (See Matthew 7:16,17.)

I have said that " soul-force " as soul-force, has its origin in the soul. More correctly, it rises from the body or animal life-this the Bible calls " flesh ". There are great discoveries at the present time of powers in the " soul ", such as our fathers never dreamed of. These forces have their origin in " flesh " and not " spirit ", even though they do not appear so, for the " soul " is under the power of the flesh, until the regenerated

spirit rules by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within. He desires to control and use the soul faculties. For instance, either the mind-one of the faculties of the soul is energized and animated by soul-force, or it is renewed by the Holy Spirit, and energized by Him through the human spirit.

The danger to-day is the counterfeit in the soul-realm of everything in the spiritual realm. Through ignorance there has been a developing and using of these psychic forces, thinking them to be spiritual. But the word spoken by Christ is the test. He said, " It is the Spirit that quickeneth ". Only that which comes from the Holy Spirit through your spirit, has its origin in God. The latent powers of the soul are not Divine-though some think they are. For example, some say that the " gift of healing " is in the soul, requiring to be developed by those who have it. A clergyman writes, " This power is sometimes spoken of as ` animal magnetism', sometimes as `psychic power'. . . . This power when dedicated to God becomes a ` gift of the Spirit '" But surely the true gifts of the Spirit must come from God, who is Spirit, via the spirit, and not the " soul ".

Again, in connection with the seeking of " manifestations " as an evidence of a believer having received the " Baptism of the Spirit ", methods have been used to bring these about, that synchronize with the methods of mesmerism, and thus counterfeits have broken into the true Church of Christ. In other cases believers have had a true influx of the Holy Spirit into their human spirit, and then through ignorance they have developed the psychic power latent in the human frame, and brought about mixture in their own life and service for God, e.g., if a chorus is sung over and over again, they can bring a meeting into a psychic condition, when those present become incapable of intelligent thinking, or of any decisive action of the will.

Thus on a flood-tide of psychic force in the world to-day, the demons are carrying out their plans and purposes. " It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Every child of God is governed in all service-preaching, teaching, working-either by the Holy Spirit or by the psychic force of which we speak. It is the spirit that is regenerated-" a new spirit will I give you ". Fausset says that the spirit is the shrine where the Holy Ghost dwells, and it is the organ through which He works. When He comes in and renews the spirit and dwells there, He then renews the mind, and gains control over the faculties. As we walk in the Spirit, and fulfil the conditions of His working, we become " spiritual " in all our actions. Everything touched will have a spiritual stamp, every faculty will be changed, quickened, uplifted. The believer becomes a " new man ", and not only a new man, but one who has the life of God in his spirit. Through the renewal of the mind, in due season, confused thinking passes away, and the mind becomes clear.

" The flesh profiteth nothing." How true it is in spiritual work. If it is animated by the flesh life of the soul there is no fruit. Toil as you may-no fruit ! The reason is that it is " soul ", energized by the life of nature, and therefore it " profits nothing ". Vast toil and little fruitage ! It is quite a fair exegesis of these words to say that if the " flesh " profits nothing, soul-force also profits nothing.

Let us look at some passages in John's Gospel, and note the Lord's words about His own attitude as to reliance upon Himself and His own " powers "-which in His case were sinless powers. Our Lord had spoken about " eating His flesh " and " drinking His blood " (John 6:53-58), and His disciples said it was a " hard saying ". It was in connection with the apprehension of spiritual truth that the Lord said that the "flesh" profited nothing. This is a very " hard saying " to the flesh, and to the natural man who is unable to receive the things of the Spirit.

How marvellous to read that the Lord Jesus Christ said " The Son can do nothing of Himself ". In no case did He originate His own activities. He did, He said, just what He saw the Father do-" the Father dwelling

in Me doeth His works ". There should be in our measure, a continuous waiting upon Him for every step taken, until we can see what is from Him, and what originates in ourselves, and then we may know the co-working of God in all our words and work.

The Lord Jesus said again, " As I hear, I judge ". " I receive not honour from men." " I came not to do Mine own will," " I seek not Mine own glory." That was the position He took, and it is the position we are to take-entire dependence upon God. Again the Lord said, " No man can come to Me except the Father draw him " (John 6:44)

The danger to-day, for the true children of God, is the development of psychic powers in ignorance of their existence. There is also peril through the wide-spread teaching on psychology. Children are now to be saved from their " weaknesses " by psychic means, not by conviction of sin, conversion and regeneration. Even children of God need to be careful lest they take a psychological view of themselves, and whilst trusting God on the one hand, become so occupied with the " laws " of spirit, soul and body, as to practically forget reliance upon the Holy Spirit Himself, Whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. In the great supernatural movements of to-day there is a vast amount of psychic power. I have just received a letter from abroad concerning a great healing movement, and the writer says, " It is all a dead failure. There are thousands upon thousands who have come, but it is failure, and what can you expect if the leader who ` lays hands ' on others smokes and drinks whisky ! "

Let me close with a few points in which " soul-force " can be a danger in the Christian life. There can be " soul-force " in relation to the will. The Lord liberates the will, and energizes it, but it must be energized by the Spirit and not by the flesh. There is a possibility of soulforce in will prayer. There can be a bringing of willpower to bear upon another person, through soul-force energizing the will. In ignorance of this danger, some believers project their thoughts on to the person they are praying for, saying that such and such a one " shall " do this or that. To avoid the possibility of soul-force prayers, we should be careful always to pray upward in a prayer directed to God. Every prayer should be directed Godward, and should never be a telling the Lord what to do for somebody else. We may pray that God will direct them what to do, but we ought not to say that they " must " do what we think is God's will they should do, or even that they " shall not " do what we know is wrong. We are members of one Body, but we are each of us responsible to God only, and before Him we must stand or fall.

Then there is the danger of the drawing out of psychic forces in worship. The Lord said "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth". What means then all the cultivation of the sensuous in the churches? Why do some people, living a worldly life all the week, become so happy because they have gone to church on the Sunday? Is it not that through the music and other influences, they have been made happy and comforted ? They have been soothed, but the question is, have they been truly convicted of sin and regenerated? Is it wrong to have music ? Not at all.

There is a worship of God in song. But think of the psychic elements in the worship of the Roman Catholic churches ! Dr. Andrew Murray points out that the ordinary activities of the soul intrude into worship. He adds that people little think that one reason why they do not get victory over some sin, is because they yield to the soul life in the religious part of them. They yield to self (flesh) in their worship, and thus keep alive and active some fleshly sin, fed from a quarter they little suspect. They think they have done with the " flesh ", and cannot understand why these things remain. The strength of the " sin " lies in the activity of the soul in its worship of God. It is " flesh " under cover of the religious life. What must be dealt with first is our approach to God. He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, "for the Father seeketh such to worship

Him ".

The present danger of the spiritual believer is the danger of soul-force. There are currents of thought sweeping in all directions. Many are caught in them, and are not on guard against such currents. You can cut yourself off from them absolutely, by taking your place in the death of Christ, and asking that it shall come between you and all the atmospheric forces that are abroad at this time.

Let us ask ourselves whether our minds have been really renewed ? Are they illuminated and energized by the Spirit of God, or have we only the mind of the natural man ? The Rationalism of to-day is not going to be dealt with by intellectual arguments, but by spiritual power, and by prayer. Let us pray that the Lord will teach us how to live and walk after the Spirit. With a renewed mind may we learn to discern the difference between soul and spirit. " For the Word of God is quick and powerful ... dividing between soul and spirit," so that the soul life is dealt with at the Cross, and we become " spiritual ".

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