

# Spirit Force vs. Psychic Force

by Watchman Nee

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*Watchman Nee explores the distinction between spiritual power and psychic force, emphasizing the need for discernment in the face of false wonders and the importance of balanced spiritual growth.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:24, Revelation 13:2

**Topics:** "Discernment", "Spiritual Power vs. Psychic Force"

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## Description

Watchman Nee emphasizes the distinction between spiritual power and psychic force, warning against the deceptive signs and wonders that may arise in the last days. He highlights the importance of discerning the source of power in ministry, advocating for reliance on the Holy Spirit rather than human abilities or soul power. Nee illustrates how many church practices, such as emotional revivals and music, can often stem from the soul rather than the spirit, leading to temporary effects rather than lasting spiritual growth. He calls believers to lay down their own strengths and talents, allowing God to work through them, as true power comes from the Spirit alone. Ultimately, he stresses that only the spirit can impart life, while the soul, despite being alive, cannot bring true transformation.

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## Transcript

We will continue with this important topic of the latent power of the soul. We have seen what psychic force can do and have heard how to distinguish between things of God and things not of God. At the end of this age there are many wonders, miracles and supernatural feats. Are these performed by God Himself or by the operation of another kind of power? We need to know how to divide the spiritual from the soulical. We will now relate still further how soul power works; that is, what its operational methods are. Such knowledge will further help us to know what is of God and what is not of God.

Prophecies in the Bible

But first, let us look into the Scriptures to discover what are the signs at the end of this age and before the imminent return of the Lord.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. (Matt. 24.24)

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. And I saw

one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast ...and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months ...And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of man. (Rev. 13.2-5,12-13)

And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2 Thess. 2.8-10)

Before we explain these passages please notice that in 2 Thessalonians 2.9 there are said to be "lying wonders"-wonders are actually performed, but with the objective of deceiving the people. These phenomena are not imaginings but facts. Only, their motive is deceptive.

All three passages we have just read point to one matter: these are things that will transpire in the great tribulation. Yet without a doubt some of these occurrences seem to happen before the time of the great tribulation. This is in accordance with a rather obvious rule in the Bible-that before the fulfillment of a prophecy there usually occurs beforehand something similar which stands as a foretoken of its final realization. For this reason many prophetic scholars agree that things which will come to pass during the great tribulation are now happening one after another, though not as intense as will be the case in the future days.

Now the Bible passages which we have quoted above have already shown us the characteristic of the great tribulation period. During that time there will be great signs and wonders. Before the coming of the Lord, what the Antichrist will be particularly interested in performing are signs and wonders. It is common knowledge that before a person arrives, his shadow is first seen, and his voice is heard ahead of him. Likewise, before the arrival of the great tribulation, the shadow and sound of the signs and wonders of the great tribulation are already present. Since signs and wonders will become most common during the great tribulation, these are bound to increase in our present day.

#### A Personal Remark

Before we proceed further, I would like to make a remark. I personally am not antagonistic to miracles. There are many recorded in the Bible; and they are most precious and extremely important. I have stressed in the past how a believer needs to grow in several respects. Let me reiterate them once again. First, after one is saved he should seek for proper knowledge of the Bible. Second, he should desire to make progress in the spiritual life, such as victory, holiness, perfect love, and so forth. This is very very important. Third, we should be fervent in winning souls. Fourth, we should trust in God with such singleness of faith that we may see God working miracles.

There are many defects in the church today. Many believers are interested in nothing more than the expounding of the Scriptures. Their knowledge is excellent, yet they neither care for nor seek after growth in spiritual life. Or some may go a step further and search for the higher life and the deeper things of God, but they neglect the other three aspects. Still others have zeal but have no knowledge. All such lopsided strivings are unhealthy. Is it not surprising that in the church today those who seek to either literally or

spiritually expound the Bible, or to pursue after deeper and richer life, or to be zealous in soul winning are not lacking in number, but few there be who trust God with a living faith so as to obtain something from Him?

Every believer should strive to develop equally these four aspects of growth so that there be no unbalanced situation. Miracles, therefore, I am not against. On the contrary, I value them highly. I nonetheless call for discernment due to false miracles and lying wonders. Hence when I speak about these counterfeits I have not the slightest thought of opposing miracles per se.

Please remember that all the works of God are done by the Holy Spirit with the cooperation of our spirit. They are never realized by man's soul. It is Satan who makes use of the power of man's soul that psychic force which due to the fall is now hidden in man's flesh. And it is therefore inevitable that in the last days he will raise up an Antichrist who will be given his own power and authority, for he will have to rely upon the latent power of man's soul.

I will now give some examples to help us in understanding how certain phenomena are not the demonstrations of spiritual power but are the manifestations of soul's latent force. Since we have already dealt with the miraculous side of the soul's power, we will here focus on its non-miraculous side.

#### Example 1 - Personal Evangelism

Just as our psychological conditions vary from one person to another so our soul powers differ too. Some people have stronger minds; they can sometimes read others' thoughts. One may think that in order to find appropriate words with which to talk to another person he must know the thought of that person. This is the natural way of knowing, which should be rejected.

Forgive me for illustrating this point out of my own personal experience. In my contact with people I can easily ascertain their thoughts after only a short exchange of words. I just know without any special reason. When I first began to serve the Lord I thought such natural perception of the other's mind was most helpful in the work. But upon understanding better, I dared not use my natural ability further. Each time such a situation arises now, I immediately resist with prayer.

In talking with people, it is not necessary for you to know what they are thinking about in their minds. Furthermore, it is vain; for whatever is of the soul and done by its power will end in vanity. If a work is done by psychic force it will not build up another person's life even though he may profess to be helped, because there is no real profit deposited in the depth of his being. So when an individual comes to you, the most important thing for you to do is to ask God to show you how to help him. You should tell the Lord that, as you do not know what that man is thinking about nor are certain of his psychic and spiritual condition, you come to Him in utter dependence for Him to give you appropriate words.

What you need is to lay down yourself completely in order to receive help from God.

#### Example 2 - Revival Meeting

It is rather amazing how many brothers who preach a lot mention the matter of meetings to me. They assert that if they go to a church hall and find the lights dim, attendance low, and empty chairs abundant, they seem to lose their power upon standing up to preach. But should the lights be burning bright and, the audience full and enthusiastic, they appear to grow in power. But what kind of power is this?

May I frankly say that this is none other than the power of your own soul force. The power which comes from the Holy Spirit is never affected by outside environment. Anyone who wishes to know what preaching in soul power is need only attend a big meeting packed with people and provided with the finest equipment, and just listen to the people singing and watch the movement of the audience. You will be able to sense that there is special power in a crowded place. What power is this? Do you feel a force which presses on you? It cannot be the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the soul.

Why is it considered soul power? Just observe what these people are doing. In singing, they sing in unison towards one direction, resulting in the concentration of all the soul powers generated by the multitude. How great is this power! You may come with the thought of helping them, but in such an atmosphere you will instead be influenced by them. How dangerous this is. A great many of the Lord's servants tell me the same story as to how the numbers in attendance or the atmosphere of the gathering and so forth will either help or hinder their work. I always answer that they are controlled by circumstance because they preach in their own strength.

### Example 3 - Singing

Many times singing is of great assistance in God's work. Sometimes, though, it cannot help but be a soulical activity. A great number of people enjoy visiting certain church groups because the music there is superb. Some groups spend over a million dollars merely to install a pipe organ. We have heard people say that when they go to such places, the moment they hear the sound of the organ and the voice of singing their spirits are immediately released to God's presence. Indeed, such a thing does happen. But are they really being brought to the presence of God? Can people's spirits be released and drawn closer to God by a little attraction such as this? Is this God's way?

I am afraid many arrangements in these places are carnal. They try to stir up a man's emotion and incite his religious instinct through the sounds of organ and song. Such power is not of God, but of hymns and music. We too sing hymns, but we will not put our confidence in hymns. Only what is done by the Holy Spirit is profitable; nothing else can reach into our spirit.

Have you ever been to a remote country place? Thank God, He gave me the opportunity to visit such a place. Once I went to a village by the sea. The inhabitants there were all fishermen. There were believers scattered throughout the vicinity of this village. They had meetings with sometimes twenty, thirty, or even fifty or sixty persons present. Whenever they all assemble together and sing, what an irregular tune pierces your ears! Some sing fast and some sing slow, resulting in a lapse of several minutes because the fast ones have already finished the last line but must wait for a spell until the slower ones catch up. Can you possibly meet under this kind of circumstance? You will probably be dying with impatience, and your power will be all but dissipated. One brother told me that after listening to their singing he could no longer preach. I answered him by saying that there was a reason for it: Did the- power come from him or from God?

You and I usually look to the environment and are influenced by it. But if it is of the Holy Spirit, we will be controlling the environment. This is a deep principle to which each of us should hold fast. Let us not use our own psychic force lest we be controlled by environment.

Sometimes in an oppressive atmosphere singing may be used by God to release people. Prayer at times may too be a help. But if we make singing or prayer the center, we face the peril of releasing soul power. Many people live carelessly for six days, and then attend a church meeting on Sunday. They hear the

singing of many hymns and feel warm and joyful. But let us inquire from whence this kind of warmth and joy comes? I can prove that something is defective here. Should a person live casually for six days and then come to God one day, he should instead feel guilty and reprove himself. How then is it that the singing makes him feel warm and joyful? This cannot be spiritual power. I do not wish to be a narrow critic, but it must be pointed out that too much singing does excite soul power.

#### Example 4 - Bible Expounding

There is the danger of expressing the latent power of the soul even in studying the Bible. For instance, someone is puzzled over a certain passage of Scripture. He does not understand what it means. So he constantly thinks about it, whether walking on the road or sleeping in his bed or sitting in his study or riding on the train. Suddenly a flash of light shines on him; he now seems to be able to expound that passage to himself logically. If he has a good memory he will no doubt store it in his mind; if his memory is not so keen he will write it down in a notebook. Is not such a sudden interpretation wonderful? Yet the question must be asked, Is this dependable? Because it can sometimes come from soul power. By looking at its result, the interpretation can be fairly judged. For such novel, special, seemingly profound exposition may not bear spiritual fruit. Not only he himself may not derive life from it, he may also have no way to impart life to others while giving out his interpretation. All he can do is to help the mind of people a little.

#### Example 5-Joy

A great number of people desire to have joy in their feeling. The so-called holy laugh is an extreme case in point. It is taught that if a person is filled with the Holy Spirit he invariably will have this holy laugh. He who claims to have this kind of laughing cannot control himself. Without any reason he will laugh and laugh and laugh as if infected by a certain disease, and will appear to be partially insane.

Once in a certain meeting, after the sermon was concluded, it was announced that everybody should seek for this holy laugh. All began to beat tables or chairs, jumping and leaping all around, until not long afterwards this so-called holy laughing came. People would merely look at one another and break out laughing. The more they thought about it the funnier it became. And so they could not contain themselves and kept on laughing. What is this? Can this possibly be the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Can this be His work? No, this is plainly one of the works of the soul. I mention this extreme case in order to illustrate through an "extreme" how we may fly off on a tangent by just two or three degrees of incorrectness. When Mr. Barlow (a beloved fellowChristian) was here meeting with us, one particular help I received from him was this observation of his: that in order to see if a thing is right or wrong, one only need magnify it to a hundred degrees, that is, have whatever it is drawn to the extreme. The guiding principle is that if it is wrong at the hundredth degree a person knows it is also wrong at the first or second degree. It is very difficult to judge by the first or second degree alone; in case there is any error such error is bound to be too minute to be discerned. But by lengthening or enlarging the situation or circumstance, everything will become most distinct.

A Chinese proverb runs like this: Missing by a hundredth or a thousandth of an inch will end up in a distance of a thousand miles. You may start with only a mistake of one hundredth or one thousandth of an inch and find yourself afterwards with a discrepancy of one thousand miles. Or conversely stated, by looking at the discrepancy of a thousand miles you can see the mistake at one hundredth or one thousandth of an inch.

Suppose there are two lines which are not exactly parallel but are off at a slight angle of one or two degrees hardly noticeable to the naked eye. If you lengthen these lines an inch longer the distance between them becomes obviously greater. Who knows how many hundreds of miles apart from each other these will be if these lines were to be extended to the ends of the earth? The distance at tens of thousands of miles away from their origin proves the existence of error formed at the starting point.

Now let us apply this rule to the so-called holy laugh. How do people get this laugh? What procedure do they follow, or what condition must they fulfill? It is nothing but simply the asking to laugh. There is but one thought, which is, to laugh. Are they seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Their lips may indeed utter such words as "O God, fill me with Your Spirit." Nevertheless, that is merely a procedure; the aim of asking to be filled with the Spirit is something else than to be so filled. Though they may say so with their mouths, their heart desire is elsewhere. What is their aim? They want to laugh, to be joyful. They do not pray, "O God, I ask You to fill me with Your Spirit. I do not care for external sensation. If You fill me with Your Spirit, I am satisfied with or without feeling." Whoever wishes to be filled with God's Spirit ought to assume such an attitude.

Let me relate a true story. A student had repented and believed in the Lord. He had a fellowstudent who professed to be filled with this holy laugh and seemed to be excessively joyful. This fellowstudent urged him to seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit, saying how joyful he himself was from dawn to dusk without any sadness, and stating how helpful this experience would be to spiritual growth. Considering that his fellow-student was a believer and already a possessor of this experience, the recently saved student thought he too should have it. Accordingly, he began to pray earnestly to God. He continued in prayer, asking God to give it to him; to such an extent that he lost his appetite and neglected his study.

Later on he went to see his teacher and asked that he pray for him. The student himself pleaded fervently with God, and vowed that he would not get up from prayer that evening if God did not give it to him. He kept on praying till suddenly he leaped up and shouted how joyful he was. He laughed and laughed. The more he laughed the funnier he felt. He laughed and danced and shouted. His teacher thought he must be out of his mind. Acting as though he were a physician, the teacher took hold of him and said, "Brother, be quiet, do not act disorderly." But the more he was admonished, the fiercer he reacted. His teacher dared not say anything more, being fearful lest he offend the Holy Spirit if this were truly of God. Finally the student went home and was better the next day. Now this was nothing but a great release of soul power, for he had fulfilled the condition for its release.

#### Example 6 - Visions and Dreams

Nowadays many people in the churches are seeking after visions and dreams. If any should ask me if I believe in them, I would reply that I do not oppose visions and dreams; I myself have had some experience of them. Sometimes they can be helpful. Yet I want to call your attention to their source. Where do they come from—are they of God or not of God?

How frequently in a meeting someone commences to tell of seeing a vision and this touches off an avalanche of visions until almost all in the congregation have testified to having seen visions and dreamed dreams. Hearing about visions, people begin to pray themselves, asking God to give them the same experience. They will fast and pray for several nights if a vision is not granted. Gradually their bodies will be weakened, their minds become blank, and their wills lose all power of resistance. They then receive what are called visions or dreams. No doubt they receive something, but how do they receive these

visions and dreams? Are these from God? Such indulgence as letting the mind become blank and the will passive is definitely against the teaching of the Bible. They simply hypnotise themselves.

Some people are prone to dream, and they seem to be able to interpret their dreams, though often in a ludicrous way. -I had a doctor friend who seemed to be able to dream easily. Each time I saw him I would be told of new dreams and their interpretations. He dreamed almost every night and frequently had three or four of them in one night. Why was this so? Was it because God desired so much to give him dreams? I know why. He was usually a daydreamer, therefore he dreamed at night too. It was quite amazing to find so clever a doctor with such confused thoughts. His mind was continually drawing pictures from morning till night. He had no way to control his thought. What he dreamed at night was what he had thought about during the day. Because of this I besought him most directly that unless he resisted these many dreams he would ultimately be deceived and his spiritual life could not grow. Thank God, he grew better later on. From this we know that many of the dreams are not of God but are the effects of a scattered mind.

### Examine the Source

Some seek for visions, some profess they have seen light or flame, and some announce they have had dreams. Following their testimonies, many others begin to claim they have had similar experiences. I do not oppose these things, but I do probe as to their origin. Do they come from the soul or from the spirit? Let us keep in mind that whatever is done in the spirit, the soul can duplicate; but whatever is copied by the soul serves no other purpose than to counterfeit the spirit. If we do not examine the source of these phenomena, we will easily be deceived. The most important point here is not to deny these things but instead to examine them to see if they emerge from the soul or from the spirit.

### Differences in Effects

What is the difference in effects between the operation of the spirit and that of the soul? This will afford us a major clue in differentiating between what is of the spirit and what is of the soul. "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. 15.45). Paul says here that the first Adam became a living soul. The soul is alive. It has its life, therefore it enables man to do all sorts of things. This refers to the position which Adam had. Then the apostle continues with: "the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." This word is worthy of close attention; it is most precious and significant. The difference in effects between the operations of the spirit and the soul is clearly given right here. The soul is itself alive and has life in itself. The spirit, however, is able to give life to others and cause them to live. The soul is itself living, yet it cannot make others live. But the spirit is not only living in itself, it can also make others live. Only the spirit is capable of quickening people into life. The soul, no matter how strong it is, cannot impart life to others. "It is the spirit," says the Lord, "that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6.63).

We must distinguish these two operations very clearly, for this is of the utmost importance. None can work satisfactorily if he is confused on this point. Let me repeat: the soul is itself truly alive, but it cannot make others to live. The spirit, on the other hand, is not only itself living but in addition gives life to others. This is why I state with such emphasis that we must lay down our soul power. All that is of the soul is of no avail. We are not quarreling over terminologies, for this is too great a principle. Although the soul is alive, it has no way to make others live. Hence in helping people, we should aim at the depth of their beings instead of merely aiding their minds. We must not work according to psychic force, since it can neither save nor profit anyone. How very careful we need to be. How we must deny whatever comes out of the soul. For it not

only cannot help people, it also hinders God's work. It offends God as well as deprives Him of His glory.

### The Danger of Working in Soul Power

Let me use some common illustrations to show the difference between the workings of the spirit and of the soul. And again, I will not mention those miraculous cases because I have already touched upon them. We may say that it is quite customary in the church today to work by psychic means. How often psychological methods are used in ministry meetings to attract people! How psychic ways are engaged in in believers' meetings to stimulate the audience. By observing the methods used, one can judge what kind of work is being done. Let me say frankly that many sermons can only help people's souls, but not their spirits. Such messages are merely spoken out of the soul, hence they can only reach man's soul and afford him a little more mental knowledge. We ought not labor this way, because such work never penetrates into man's spirit.

How are many revival meetings conducted? (I am not against the reviving of believers, this I must make abundantly clear. I am only asking if the way of conducting such meetings today is of the spirit.) Is it not true that in many revival gatherings a kind of atmosphere is first created to make people feel warm and excited? A chorus is repeated again and again to warm up the audience. A few stirring stories are told to precipitate the giving of testimonies. These are methods and tactics, but not the power of the Holy Spirit. When an atmosphere is almost fully heated up, the preacher will then stand up and preach. As he is preaching he is already aware of the kind of result he will achieve that day. He has various strategies ready. By clever maneuvering he can anticipate that a certain class of people will shiver and another class of people will cry-that there will be confession and the making of resolutions.

Such type of revival needs to be renewed every one or two years because the effect of the medicine given previously will wear off and the old condition return. Sometimes the effect of an earlier revival will even fade away after only a few weeks or a few months. Great zeal and willingness are indeed exhibited at the start of a revival, but after a while everything is over and done with. This is due to no other reason than a lack of life.

If the stories of many believers were ever recorded, they would comprise a history of revivals: revivals after falls, and falls after revivals. The stimulant used at the first revival has to be increased in dosage for the second one. In order to be effective, the method employed in the second instance must be more emotional and more stirring. I would therefore suggest that this kind of method could best be described as an injection of "spiritual morphine." It needs to be injected time and again. It is evident that the soul can only live by itself, it has not the power to make others live. Working through soul power even if people weep, make resolutions, and become zealous-is, practically speaking, worth nothing.

### The Spirit Gives Life

What is regeneration? It is receiving the resurrection life of the Lord. Why does the Bible say we are regenerated through the resurrection of the Lord instead of the birth of the Lord? Because the new life received is more than the life of Bethlehem. That life which is born in Bethlehem was yet to die, but the resurrection life never dies. "I am . . . the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1.17,18. The resurrection life never dies but lives forever. The life that is born is in the flesh, it can therefore die. What we receive at regeneration is life which lives forever and never dies.

What is resurrection? Let us suppose that here lies a corpse. It is absolutely impossible to raise up the dead by human means. No matter how much energy is exerted and heat used, the dead will not come to life. The only way to make it live is to put God's life into it. This life which quickens the dead is resurrection life. And this is resurrection.

What environment is worse than death? What is colder than death? A corpse will deteriorate and decay more and more. But when resurrection life is infused, death is swallowed up by life. Consequently, a regenerated person is able to resist whatever belongs to death and is able to cast off all dead things.

The following is an illustration which has sometimes been used to explain resurrection. There was once a man who did not believe in resurrection. He was a very important person among a circle of atheists. After he died, the epitaph on his tombstone read: "Unbreakable tomb". The tomb had been built with marble. Most surprisingly, that huge marble sarcophagus was one day split open. It so happened that an acorn had fallen into the crevice of the stones during construction. It gradually grew into a big oak tree, and eventually burst the tomb wide open. A tree has life, hence it can burst open a place of death. Life alone can conquer death. This is regeneration, this is resurrection.

The spirit quickens; it alone can impart life. This is what we need to notice. But unfortunately there are too many substitutes for the spirit in our day.

#### Must Deal with the Soul

God only works with His own strength; consequently we must ask Him to bind our soul life. Each time we work for God, we need to first deal with ourselves, setting ourselves aside. We should lay down our talents and our strong points. We should ask God to bind these things. We should say to Him: "O God, I want You to work, I do not want to depend on my talent and my power. I ask You Yourself to do the work, for by myself I can do nothing."

Today many workers consider God's power to be insufficient so they add in their own. Work on such a basis is not only unprofitable but also harmful. Do remember that the work of the Holy Spirit never tolerates the meddling of man's hand. I often say that in God's work man should be like a paper figure which is lifeless and capable of doing nothing. He needs an influx of life to enable him to work. Let us deny ourselves to the degree that we become like paper figures, having no power at all in ourselves. All power must come from above; all methods used must also come from above. We know the Spirit alone quickens. God works by the Spirit. If we desire God to work, we must ask Him to bind our soul life; otherwise He is not free to work.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12.24,25). The word "life" here in the Greek points to the "soul". It means that whosoever desires to preserve his soul life shall lose his soul life; but whosoever loses his soul life shall keep his soul life to life eternal. This is a singular command of the Lord. He speaks in such terms so as to explain the meaning of the preceding words, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." First die, then something happens. If a believer does not set aside his own soul life, the spirit will never be able to work and so profit other people. In order to perform deeper work for the Lord we must deal practically with the soul. The soul life needs to be lost. A grain of wheat is good and its golden color looks very nice. But if it is laid on a table, it remains one grain even until a hundred years later. It will never add one more grain. All our soul powers are like that grain of

wheat which has not fallen into the earth. It can never produce fruit.

May we look at this problem with all seriousness. Does that resurrection life, which is holy and without blemish and which you now possess, bear much fruit? Some ask why they are unable to help or to save people? Some inquire why they lack power in work? Many confess they do not have power. But I will answer that they have no power to work because their own power is too great. Since they already possess great strength in themselves, where is the opportunity for God to work? By using their own wisdom, method, strength, or natural ability, believers block the manifestation of God's power.

Many miraculous phenomena are performed by soul force instead of by God. How can they expect good and lasting results if they substitute for the power of God their own natural abilities? Many revival meetings may appear very successful at the moment, but they drop to zero in effectiveness afterwards. No doubt some revivals do help people. But what I am referring to here are those works done through human methods. May I most solemnly declare that whoever aims at better and deeper work ought not speak of power. Our responsibility is to fall into the earth and die. If we die, then bearing fruit is most natural.

What does the Lord say about the one who loses his life, that is, the one who hates his life in this world? He will keep it unto life eternal. It is as though I have eloquence, yet I am unwilling to use it. My heart is not set on eloquence-I will not use it as my working instrument-I lose my eloquence- I refuse to depend on it. And what is the result? I gain life; that is, I am able to help others in life. It is the same with respect to my having managerial ability or any other ability but denying the use of it. I wait before God instead. Thus will I do people real good. Let us therefore learn not to use our own power so that we may bear much fruit.

Power ought to be obtained on resurrection ground. Resurrection is living beyond death. What we need is not greater power but deeper death. We must resist all natural powers. Whoever has not lost his soul life knows nothing of power. But the one who has passed through death is in possession of life. Whoever loses his own soul life just as a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies shall grow in the life of God and shall bear much fruit.

I believe many people are so rich and strong that they give no ground for God to work. I frequently recall the words, "helpless and hopeless." I must tell God, "All that I have is Yours, I myself have nothing. Apart from You I am truly helpless and hopeless." We need to have such a dependent attitude towards God that it is as if we cannot inhale or exhale without Him. In this way we shall see that our power as well as our holiness all come from Him. Whatever we have is from Him. Oh how God delights in seeing us coming hopeless and helpless to Him.

A brother once asked me, "What is the condition for the working of the Holy Spirit?" To which I replied that the Holy Spirit never engages the help of soul power. The Holy Spirit must first bring us to a place where we can do nothing by ourselves. Let us learn to deny all which comes from our natural selves. Whether miraculous or common, we must deny whatever does not come from God. God will then display His power to accomplish that which He has intended to do.

#### The Lord's Example

"Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner" (John 5.19). The Son can do nothing of Himself. In other words, of all the things which the Lord has done, not a single one of them is done by Himself. This is our Lord's continual attitude. He does

nothing by His own power or according to His own idea. Whatever would come from Him is what He denies to do. Yet is there anything wrong with His soul? Is not His soul power quite usable? Since He has not the slightest trace of sin, it would not be sinful for Him to use His soul power. Nonetheless, He affirms that the Son can do nothing of Himself. If such a holy and perfect Lord as He refuses to use His own power, how about us?

The Lord is so perfect, yet His whole life is one which depends helplessly and hopelessly on God. He comes to the world to do the Father's will in all things. We who are but a speck of dust are really nothing. We must set aside psychic force and deny whatever comes from the soul before we can work with spiritual force and bear much fruit. May God bless us.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/watchman-nee/spirit-force-vs-psychic-force/>

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