

“POWER OF SUGGESTION”

(Discourse by E. P. Taliaferro given at Pertle Springs Convention as reported in 1912 Convention Report, beginning on page 119.)

Dear friends and brethren, this may seem a peculiar subject for us, as Truth friends, to consider, since the power of suggestion is usually used and spoken of in connection with hypnotism, spiritism and occultism, in its various forms. But it is, nevertheless a fact that every one of us is using the power of suggestion, every day of our lives, to a more or less degree, knowingly or unknowingly.

Every doctor uses it in treating his patients; every lawyer in his practice of law; every business man in the transaction of business; and every parent and every school teacher, in training and instructing their children and pupils; so, therefore, it is necessary that we understand the operation and result of the power of suggestion, so that we may always use it in the right way; in a way that will be helpful and not detrimental. Not only does the Adversary and fallen angels use the power of suggestion through their emissaries, in the practice of the various forms of occultism, which is always using it in the wrong way, tending to superstition, degradation and immortality; but it is also true, on the other hand, that our heavenly Father uses the power of suggestion in dealing with his Church, in a way that is beneficial to them, if they submit themselves to His suggestions, which are not audible suggestions, but are given to us through His Word, the Bible.

It is a fact that every step of the Church's journey, from the time they leave their condition of sin and alienation from God, until they are brought into the Kingdom, is accomplished for them by the power of suggestion. Notice that our Lord suggests this very thought when he says, "No man cometh unto me except my Father which sent Me, draw him." Here we are told that before we can even come unto Christ, to accept Him as our Savior, we must be drawn of the Father. Thus the heavenly Father draws us to Christ, by His holy Spirit, which always operates through His Word of truth; that is, by the suggestions of the Lord, contained in the Bible, taking effect upon our minds, we are drawn to Christ, to accept Him as our Savior. But in order for us to be thus influenced and controlled by the Lord's suggestions, which are suggestions of truth and righteousness, we must have certain qualities of mind to which truth and righteousness will appeal. We must at least have honesty or sincerity of heart. This is produced by what is known, in the science of phrenology as the faculty of the mind, called conscientiousness, and if we have coupled with this the faculty of veneration, which gives us a desire to reverence and worship a supreme being, as our Creator, and if we also have some development in the faculty of spirituality, which gives us a desire for spiritual things, we are then in a fair way to come under the control of the Lord's suggestions, through His Word.

But even then there are two more things necessary to be accomplished in us. For just as it is necessary for the hypnotist to gain the confidence of his subject, and cause him to lose self-confidence, before he can control him by the power of suggestion, to hypnotize him, just so we must be caused to lose our own self-confidence and be brought to recognize our own insufficiency and also have our confidence developed in God and His Word, the Bible, before we can be controlled with His suggestions, contained therein.

(Bro. Taliaferro here gave several illustrations of how a hypnotist operates, to accomplish the breaking down of his subject's self-confidence and to develop his confidence in him, as a hypnotist.) Then he continued: The Apostle Paul shows how necessary it is for us to have our confidence developed in the Lord and His Word. In Heb. 11:6, where he says, "For without faith [confidence] it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." As to how to accomplish this development of confidence in the fact that there is a God and that the Bible is His divine revelation, the speaker referred his hearers to chapters two and three of Volume 1—Scripture Studies.

If we haven't too much self-esteem, we will readily have our self-confidence broken down, by recognizing our weakness and frailties and will recognize, as the Scriptures declare, that we are a race of sinners, unworthy in ourselves, to even come into the presence of God. But having had our confidence established in God and in the Bible, as His Word, we will find revealed therein, that, although we are a race of sinners and unworthy of the Lord's least favor, nevertheless he has made a provision through Christ and his ransom sacrifice, whereby we may come unto God and receive His blessings and favors. So thus it is, by having our confidence established in God and in His Word, and having our own self-confidence broken down, then coming in contact with the suggestions of the Father, contained in His Word, that we are drawn to Christ to accept Him as our Savior.

So the Apostle says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God," and "How shall we believe on Him of whom we have not heard? and how shall we hear unless a preacher be sent?" Thus He shows that we must be brought into contact with the Lord's word (with his suggestions of truth) in order that we might be drawn to Christ. But we must not stop here, we must do more than be drawn to Christ, to accept Him as our Savior; if we will continue to submit our minds to Him, He will give us still further suggestions, that will accomplish in us a change of nature from human to spiritual and bring us to a position of joint-heirship with Christ in His Kingdom. Hear the Lord's suggestion through the Apostle Paul, to this class who have been drawn thus far, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) Here he suggests that we take an advance step, beyond that of repentance and faith in Christ. He suggests that we offer ourselves, in sacrifice, even as our Lord offered

himself, in sacrifice at Jordan. If we permit this suggestion to take effect upon our minds, and in compliance therewith resign our wills fully to the Lord, we place ourselves in very much the same relationship to the Lord, as the subject does to the hypnotist, when he consents to give his will up and allows himself to be hypnotized. We thus agree that we will henceforth have no will of our own; but that we will allow the Lord's every suggestion contained in His Word to influence and control our minds and lives. In the very next verse, Rom. 12:2, we have an additional suggestion, through the apostle, which we must immediately give heed to. He says, "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds."

The course of this world is to seek after earthly riches, fame, honor, wealth, social standing, etc., but the apostle suggests that we are no longer to thus seek after the aims and ambitions of the world, but having consecrated our lives to the Lord, we are henceforth to have our minds transformed, by receiving the Lord's will instead of our own, and centering our aims and ambitions on heavenly things, instead of earthly. In other words, as he suggests elsewhere, we are to "set our affections upon things above."

Thus by following the Lord's suggestions, we undergo a complete change of mind and purpose in life. This complete change of mind and purpose—from serving self, to serving the Lord, is what is styled in the Scriptures "the begetting of the spirit as new creatures." Thus the Apostle James in James 1:18 says, "For He [God] of His own will begat us with the word of truth." That is, it was the truths suggested to our minds, through the Word, of certain rewards we might obtain—of glory, honor and immortality; a change of nature from human to spiritual and to joint heirship with Christ in His kingdom; if we were willing to meet the conditions, that took hold upon our minds and prompted us to meet the conditions by making the sacrifice of the earthly things and resigning our wills fully to the Lord. Thus we can see that it was the suggestions of the Lord, that accomplished our change of mind or begetting, as the Apostle James terms it. The Apostle Peter also mentions this spirit of begetting, in 1 Pet. 1:3, 4, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his own abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

How is it that the resurrection of Jesus begets us to a new hope of life, to an incorruptible inheritance? I understand it to be this way: we see that there were certain rewards held out to our Lord which he might obtain upon conditions of obedience unto death, as we read, "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the majesty on high." Thus Christ pointed out the way to us, by which, if we follow in His footsteps, we may obtain the same glory. "He hath consecrated for us a new and living way, through the veil." (Heb. 10:20) Thus, since we see that our Lord met all the conditions, being obedient unto death, and that the heavenly

Father rewarded Him, as promised, it makes us sure that if we meet the same conditions, we will receive the same reward, as promised; so we are thus begotten to the same hope of a new life that he received.

Again the Apostle Peter in 2 Pet. 1:4 says, “Unto us are given exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature.” Thus again we see that it is by the Lord’s suggestions or promises taking effect upon our minds, that we are begotten to the Divine nature. Another point that we might notice here is that we are begotten to the divine, immortal, incorruptible nature and not merely to the spirit nature.

This is a point that has caused some of the friends some difficulty; they occasionally express themselves as being unable to see how that if we are all begotten to the Divine nature, some can be born to a lower than the Divine nature, as the Great Company. But this becomes clear if we just stop and consider that it is only the mind that is begotten. Then if we see that the mind cannot exist without the body, we will be able to see that it is the body or organism that determines the nature. So while we are, as the Apostle says, “All called in the one hope of our calling,” all begotten to the Divine nature, yet as the Apostle says, “We have this treasure [of the new mind] in leaky earthen vessels.” It will be the bodies we receive in the resurrection, that will determine the final result as to the nature; if we develop this new mind rapidly enough and to the proper degree, it will please God in the resurrection to clothe it with a divine, immortal body; thus being clothed in a divine indestructible body. The mind will likewise be indestructible. Those who fail to develop the new mind rapidly enough, to the proper degree, will be given merely spirit bodies, without the Divinity; thus being clothed with a destructible body. Should the body be destroyed, the mind would also perish.

But some one will perhaps say, surely you don’t mean to say that we have really and actually been begotten and are thus actually new creatures do you? Are we not just reckonedly new creatures? In 2 Cor. 5:17 the Apostle Paul says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Notice, he didn’t say that if any man be in Christ, he is *reckonedly* a new creature and old things have *reckonedly* passed away, and all things have *reckonedly* become new. I am afraid that is sometimes the difficulty with some. The old things (earthly aims, ambitions and desires) have only reckonedly passed away and they have only *reckonedly* received the new will, with its new aims, ambitions, etc.

But this is not the proper condition; the old things should really pass away, and all things really become new to us, if we have made a full surrender. In that case we are really and actually begotten and thus actually new creatures. Notice that if we were only reckonedly begotten, we are then only reckonedly developing a new creature and in that case it will be only a reckonedly new being when it comes to the birth in the resurrection.

So you see we must be actually begotten and actually develop a new creature, so that when it comes to the birth in the resurrection, it will actually be a spirit being.

But when we say we are actually begotten, and are actually new creatures, don't anyone misunderstand us to mean that we are perfected new creatures. There is a vast difference between being actual new creatures and perfected new creatures. We will not be perfected new creatures until we receive the new bodies, but all there is of the new creature now is actual, but it is only the new will, the new mind, with its new ambitions and desires at present.

But someone may argue that there cannot be a creature without a body and that, therefore, since we haven't the new body, we cannot be actually new creatures, but merely reckonedly new creatures; but this argument will not hold, for though we haven't yet received the new bodies, yet this new mind has a temporary body (our justified human bodies) through which it operates to develop itself until it is ready for the new body; so you see it is an actual new creature and has an actual body (although only a temporary one) and the only thing reckoned about it, is the perfection of its body.

Not only must we allow the Lord's suggestion to control us, to the extent of thus begetting us as new creatures, but we must let them still continue to control us, for the development of the new creature. The apostle shows this in the very next verse, after he has mentioned the divine promises, which accomplish our begetting. He says, "Besides this [that is in addition to consecrating and being spirit begotten] giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Thus you see the additions are to be made after we become new creatures and not before. But you will notice that while he mentions eight things, he only says we are to add seven of them. He doesn't say that we are to add the first one (faith), for he is talking to new creatures here, and so takes for granted that they already have faith, for if they didn't have the faith, they would never have made the consecration and would never have been begotten. So instead of saying to add faith, he says to add to your faith. The apostle's thought here is, evidently, that although we already have faith, it must be strengthened. So he says, "Add to your faith fortitude; and to fortitude knowledge"—or to express the same thought differently—fortify the faith which you already have, by the addition of knowledge.

Thus we might say that a general with his army, when he has captured a city from the enemy, has the city; but he must then fortify the city or the enemy will take it back again. So it is when we make our consecration and are spirit begotten. We have the faith, but we must then fortify it with knowledge, or the enemy (the adversary) will take it from us, by assailing us with all manner of theories and false doctrines, doubts, fears, etc, intended to tear down our faith. And it is only by the addition of knowledge that our faith can be

fortified, for faith is based upon knowledge. As the apostle says in Heb. 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen.” So unless we have a knowledge that gives us an evidence of those unseen things, producing the assurance, or conviction of judgment and thus giving heart reliance, it isn’t real faith at all, but merely credulity.

So in order to fortify our faith, we must increase our knowledge. Notice, also, that while as natural men, we may receive sufficient knowledge, to produce the necessary amount of faith to enable us to make the consecration, and be spirit begotten, we can not as natural men fortify that faith, for it must be fortified with a knowledge of those deep spiritual truths, which the apostle says, “the natural man cannot receive.” (1 Cor. 2:14, 9) But, he says, “God hath revealed them unto us, by his spirit, for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. 2:10) Thus it is very evident that we must first be spirit begotten and have a knowledge of these deep spiritual truths, revealed to us by the spirit, before our faith can become fortified. Then we must continue to submit our minds to the Lord’s suggestions, until the development of the new creature is completed, by making the rest of the additions the apostle here mentions, for he says that if these developments of character abound in us, we shall neither be barren (idle) nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord. Then he adds, “but he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” (2 Pet. 1:9) The apostle’s thought here is, that if we are not making these additions to our characters, that it is an evidence that we have become near-sighted, that we have lost sight of the prize of our high calling, which we only saw by faith to begin with, thus it indicates a slipping away of our faith. He says also that it is an evidence that we have forgotten that we were purged from our old sins. In other words, we have failed to consider that by consecrating and being spirit begotten that we received in full our share in the merits of Christ’s sacrifice, and gave up all right to future restitution blessings, and that therefore we must develop the new creature that has been begotten, and bring it to completion of development, or we will have no future existence at all. If we have not failed to consider this, we will be making the additions to our character that we might be accounted worthy of a spiritual resurrection.

Then he says, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall [that is ultimately or hopelessly], for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He does not say that we have to complete these additions in a day, or a month, or a year; but if we keep doing these things we shall have the abundant entrance into His Kingdom. So let us not become discouraged but determine to keep doing these things.

Notice, then, that all of these developments of character are accomplished by the suggestions of the Lord taking effect upon our minds, and controlling our lives. Thus, the

apostle says, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13) So you see, then, it is God that is accomplishing all this for us. He first works in us by the power of suggestion, to bring us to the point of consecration, where we will do his good pleasure. Then he continues to work in us by his suggestions, to actually do his good pleasure, by developing us as new creatures, as we submit our minds to his every suggestion.

But not only is the Lord working in his children with suggestions of truth and righteousness, for their development of character, to the extent that they will submit their minds to him, but Satan and the fallen angels are also very active, with their counter suggestions of evil and untruth, endeavoring to tear down our characters, to the extent that we will submit our minds to their suggestions of evil. Notice that that is the way Satan endeavored to entrap our Lord and destroy His character. When our Lord had been in the wilderness, in communion and prayer, with the heavenly Father, and without food for forty days and hungered, Satan approached with a mental suggestion, that if he would make use of the divine power He had that He could turn the stones into bread and satisfy his hunger. But our Lord did not permit this suggestion to control His mind, but immediately quoted a counter suggestion from the Lord's Word, to offset it and drive it from his mind, saying, "It is written, thou shalt not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Thus each time that Satan accosted our Lord with his evil suggestions, our Lord did not allow the suggestions to take lodgment in His mind; but each time offset them and drove them out by quoting a good suggestion from the Lord's Word. Thus you see, while we, like our Lord, cannot at all times keep these evil suggestions from coming into our minds, we can, like our Lord, keep them from taking lodgment there, by counter suggestions from the Lord's Word. But in order that we thus always be prepared to offset Satan's evil suggestions, with good suggestions, from the Lord's Word it is necessary that we continually be studying the Word and receiving the Lord's suggestions of truth into our minds.

Thus to illustrate: if Satan puts a suggestion into our minds, of pride or ambition, we can immediately offset it, and drive it from our minds by saying, "*it is written,*" "Pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction." If Satan's suggestions be along the line of evil surmising or impure or unholy thoughts, we can offset it with the good suggestions from the Lord's Word, saying "*it is written,*" "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things that are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on the things." (Phil. 4:8)

Furthermore, since we each one use the power of suggestion more or less each day of our lives, we should determine to never use suggestions that will be anything else than a benefit, help and encouragement to one another.

Now, may God help us to ever submit our minds to him and his suggestions, and to ever be on our guard against Satan and his evil suggestions.