**“Of The Laying On Of Hands”**

*Hebrews 6:2*

**Introduction**

1. The Hebrew writer includes ***“the laying on of hands”*** in a list of matters pertaining to the ***“elementary principles of Christ”*** – **Hebrews 6:1-2**
2. While it is clear by this that the subject was considered “milk” during the first century, due to our lack of involvement in such matters pertaining to the infancy of the church, it more like “meat” to us.
3. What was the ***“laying on of hands?”***
4. The Act of the Laying on of Hands
5. It is a symbolic gesture. (unless descriptive of the secular action of one who is simply grabbing hold of someone or something)
6. Indicating:
   1. **The Offerings Given to the Lord**
      1. **Leviticus 3:1-2** – peace offering.
      2. **Leviticus 4:4** – sin offering.
      3. “The person presenting a peace offering (Lev. 3:1f.) or a sin offering (Lev. 3:8, 13; 4:4; Nu. 8:12) was to lay his hands upon the animal so that he identified himself with the animal being offered.” (ISBE, 2nd ed.)
   2. **The Bestowal of a Blessing**
      1. **Genesis 48:14-15** – Jacob (Israel) giving blessings to his grandsons. (**cf. Hebrews 11:21**)
   3. **The Consecration of Individuals to a Work**
      1. **Numbers 8:10-11, 14-15** – Levites consecrated to the work of the tabernacle.
      2. **Numbers 27:15-23** – Joshua inaugurated as the next leader of Israel.
         1. ***“before all the congregation,” “in their sight”***
         2. This was done so the connection would be made by the all the people, aided by the visual, that THIS man was being given authority.
      3. **Acts 13:1-3** – Paul and Barnabas called to a work by the Holy Spirit, and they are separated to it and sent by the brethren (prophets, context).
         1. **No special significance of legitimizing their mission** – this was legitimate by the divine appointment of the Holy Spirit.
         2. **No impartation of spiritual gifts** – Paul was an apostle, which had accompanying signs (**cf. 2 Corinthians 12:11-12**)
         3. **The Holy Spirit did not command the laying on of hands** – He called them to the work, and revealed it, but they merely chose the laying on of hands as the method to separate them (like the visual for Joshua).
         4. **NOTE: An approved example, but by no means a requirement to validate the setting of men to specific works, or offices.**
   4. **The Miraculous Healing of People**
      1. **Jesus – Mark 6:5**
      2. **Others – Acts 9:12, 17; 28:8** (Ananias, Paul)
   5. **The Imparting of Spiritual Gifts**
      1. **Acts 8:14-17** – when Samaria received the word, the apostles sent Peter and John to give them the Holy Spirit.
      2. **Acts 19:5-7** – Paul laid his hands on 12 men who believed, and they received the Holy Spirit.
      3. **Romans 1:11-12** – Paul sought to come to the brethren in Rome to impart some spiritual gift.
7. What Simon Saw, and its Place in the Context of the New Testament
8. The Case in Samaria
   1. Philip had preached the word, and many believed – **Acts 8:5-8, 13** – as well as Simon the sorcerer.
   2. News reached Jerusalem, and the apostles sent Peter and John that the brethren might receive the Holy Spirit – **Acts 8:14-17**
      1. **(v. 15)** – prayed – **cf. John 14:12-14** – dependence – **1 Corinthians 12:11** – Spirit distributes as He wills.
      2. **(v. 17)** – laid hands on them – the medium through which God imparted gifts to the Christians.
         1. Distinct from Holy Spirit baptism which was direct from heaven to man.
   3. What Simon saw – **Acts 8:18-19** – it was through the laying on of the apostles’ hands that the Holy Spirit was given.
   4. Implications:
      1. **Urgency** – **(vv. 14-16)** – when they heard they sent, as they had not yet received. (**cf. Acts 19:2, 5-7** – Paul made the topic a point of emphasis as soon as he met the men, and laid hands on them as soon as they believed).
         1. The urgency manifests importance.
      2. **Exclusivity** – (**vv. 6, 14, 18)** – Philip was there working miracles, but it took Peter and John to impart the spiritual gifts – Simon recognized the exclusive nature of the ability.
9. The Remote Context
   1. The Urgency Explained
      1. In Infancy – **1 Corinthians 13:8-12**
         1. **1 Corinthians 12:1** – concerning spiritual gifts.
         2. **1 Corinthians 1:7** – of which they came short in none.
            1. Enumerated – **1 Corinthians 12:8-10**
            2. Each important – **1 Corinthians 12:7-19**
         3. Some boasting of gift, acting more important, so Paul shows a more excellent way – **1 Corinthians 12:31** – love, the ultimate objective of the gifts.
            1. Love in comparison to the gifts – **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**

**Prophecy, tongues, knowledge** **(in part)** – revelation of God’s word.

**Perfect (complete)** – referring to revelation of God’s word.

* + - * 1. Contrast of ***“in part”*** with when ***“perfect”*** comes – **1 Corinthians 13:11-12**

**(v. 11)** – Spiritual gifts for the infancy of the church before perfect written revelation.

**(v. 12)** – Revelation in pieces not as clear as fulness.

**HENCE THE URGENCY – the new churches needed God’s word to thrive, but before the time of fully written word.**

* + 1. For Edification – **1 Corinthian 14:1-4, 12** – through understanding.
    2. The Evidence in Acts – **Acts 6:8; 8:4-8; 11:27; 13:1; 15:12, 32; 21:9-14** – they needed these gifts to know God’s will, and such was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands.
  1. The Necessary Conclusion of the Exclusivity
     1. Only through apostles, cessation when the apostles die – **Acts 8:18**
     2. For revelation and confirmation, when such is complete, so is the purpose – **1 Corinthians 13:10-11; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

1. The Determination in Context
2. **Hebrews 6:2** – for the imparting of spiritual gifts.
   1. **(v. 1)** – elementary principles.
   2. **(v. 2)** – ***“baptisms”*** – indicating multiple, including, but not limited to the one baptism for the remission of sins.
   3. ***“of laying on of hands”*** – referring to imparting of spiritual gifts, as such would be a fundamental matter of the church – *NOTE: following* ***“baptisms”*** *may be significant, as new believers would be given spiritual gifts for edification.*
3. **Acts 6:6** – 7 appointed to the daily distribution.
   1. The instruction – **(vv. 2-3)**
      1. Seek out men with these characteristics.
      2. We will appoint them.
   2. The fulfillment – **(vv. 5-6)**
      1. They chose the men, and set them before the apostles…
      2. …to appoint them – which they did by laying hands on them.
   3. The instruction and the fulfillment are exactly parallel.
   4. ***“full of the Holy Spirit” (v. 3)*** – sandwiched between ***“good reputation”*** and ***“wisdom”***
      1. **What do these qualities reveal in these men?** – They are trustworthy for the work to be appointed to them.
      2. **Full of the HS** – does not necessitate miraculous, and in this context it would better fit THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT’S REVELATION IN THE LIVES OF THE MEN (**cf. Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16** – filled with Spirit, word of Christ dwell in you richly)
   5. **(v. 6)** – the laying on of hands is parallel to the appointing **(v. 3).**
   6. **(6:8; 8:6)** – Miraculous activity of Stephen and Philip explained by a previous instance when the apostles would have laid hands on them when they first believed **(cf. Acts 8:14-17** – urgency).
4. **1 Timothy 5:22** – warning about hastiness in church discipline concerning elders.
   1. Context – **(vv. 17-18)** – elders.
      1. Some assume **verse 22** has reference to the laying on of hands to appoint elders – do not be hasty in doing so.
      2. **This does not fit the immediate context.**
         1. **(vv. 17-18)** – honoring the elders who rule well.
         2. **(v. 19)** – protect their esteem from unfounded accusations.
         3. **(v. 20)** – when sin is verified with witnesses, rebuke them.
         4. **(v. 21)** – ***“these things”*** concern the reaction to accusations, and carrying out of discipline – be impartial.
         5. **(v. 22)** – don’t jump to conclusions and wind up sharing in the sins of those who seek to lay unfounded charges on elders, and act on them – ***“lay hands on”***
   2. **The laying on of hands is also used in reference to passing judgment, and administering punishment:**
      1. **Leviticus 24:14** – a blasphemer is punished, and the witnesses who heard him do so lay their hands on him first.
      2. **Acts 5:3** – Sanhedrin laid hands on apostles, put them in prison, showing charge off guilt.
5. **1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6** – Timothy’s gift.
   1. **2 Timothy 1:6** – it is assumed by many that this gift is a reference to a spiritual gift given through the laying on of Paul’s (an apostle) hands.
      1. Possibility, but not necessarily so.
      2. **Gift** – *charisma* – could be miraculous, but not always.
         1. Paul’s ministry – **Ephesians 3:2, 7** – his stewardship was given to him, was a gift.
         2. Paul’s self-control in sexual matters – **1 Corinthians 7:5-7** – an ability, credited to the grace of God.
   2. **1 Timothy 4:14** – addition of the laying on of the hands of the eldership.
      1. There is no evidence that any other than the apostles could impart spiritual gifts (**cf. Acts 8:14-19**).
   3. Paul’s and the eldership’s laying on of hands could be a reference to Timothy’s inclusion in Paul’s 2nd missionary journey – **Acts 16:1-3**
      1. **Acts 13:3** – Something similar to what happened here could have happened with Timothy.
      2. Was Timothy set apart for ministry by the HS, thus by prophecy, and separated by the eldership and Paul? – **1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6**
         1. Very possible.
         2. ***“Gift”*** – reference to his ministry/stewardship by the grace of God?
      3. Was what Paul saw in Timothy his exceptional faith, knowledge, and ability with the word which led him to choose him? – **Acts 16:2-3; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15**
         1. Very possible.
         2. ***“Gift”*** – reference to Timothy’s ability given by God, and set to use by Paul’s selection of him (**2 Timothy 1:6**).
         3. ***“by prophecy” (1 Timothy 4:14)*** – i.e. the inspired word of God, and Timothy’s good use of it led to his ***“gift.”***
            1. Would explain – ***“Do not neglect,”*** and ***“stir up the gift.”***
   4. Nevertheless, the gift and laying on of hands in **2 Timothy 1:6** could have reference to the impartation of a spiritual gift – but it is not a necessary conclusion.

**Conclusion**

1. The laying on of one’s hands has multiple possible meanings, each of which must be decided upon only by the context of the phrase.
2. It is evident that the function of imparting spiritual gifts was only through the apostles, and that spiritual gifts, and miracles have ceased, having fulfilled their God ordained purpose.