

# The Throwing Up of Hands

## *Hebrew 6:2*

Nutshell: Paul counts the laying on of hands as a fundamental Christian teaching, yet it does not enjoy the same recognition as any of the other five fundamentals in his list. In regards to the teaching of laying on of hands, the Church seems to have *thrown* up her hands instead of *laying* hands on!

I. Context: The basics which the Hebrews should have moved beyond.

II. Text

Heb 6:2 of *the instruction about* washings, also of laying on of hands, also of *the* resurrection of the dead and of everlasting judgment,

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Paul wrote an inspired book to a Jewish audience; 2 Pet 3:15-16; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1. Hebrews is the only possibility.

1. The “us” of Heb 2:3 only puts the author outside the original 12
2. Peter speaks of the Apostles in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person as well, 1 Pet 1:12

B. Outline of Hebrews

*Authority*: God has at last spoken In Son (*Ἰερόφητ*), ← follow this font  
His express image, 1:1-3a

*Theme*: **The SON** purified us from sin (Priest), then sat in authority (King), **1:3b**

I. Supreme over the angels, Inheritor by ordeal, 1:4-14  
Therefore hear Him, 2:1-4

II. Supreme as man, 2:5-9

**Psalm 8**- Since man must inherit, 2:5-8a  
but man failed, 2:8b, Christ became man, 2:9a

*Theme* reprise: crowned with glory and honor (King), **2:9b**  
to taste the death of “each one” of His own (Priest), **2:9c**



lifeless efforts = *not* trusting *my* doings + faith toward  
God = trusting *Christ's* doings

- c. Next item: Cleansings: both baptism and its OT foundational teachings of ceremonial washings. NT baptism depends on its OT foundational teachings.
- d. Now today, laying on of hands

## Outline:

- I. "Laying on of Hands"- yeah, it's a real 'thing', Heb 6:2
- II. Its OT Roots
  - A. Overall idea: Transfer
  - B. Blessing
  - C. Imputation
  - D. Testimony
  - E. Consecration
- III. The NT Practice
  - A. Blessing
  - B. Healing
  - C. Consecration
  - D. Conferring the Spirit
  - E. The Spirit's giftings
- IV. Let's Correct Our Neglect
  - E. 6:2. "Also of laying on of hands," *epitheseose cheiron*, 4x
    - 1. 6:1, "Repentance... and faith..." are called a "**foundation**"
      - a. The next four items are called "**teachings**"
      - b. Implying that they're based *on* the foundation
    - 2. All 6 items are essential, but they're a foundation waiting for a house- the rest of God's teachings, 5:12.
    - 3. Laying on of hands- a fundamental like the other 5?
      - a. Baptism sensibly follows on from repentance and faith
      - c. But can we even *define* laying on of hands?

**Kid-speak:** Have you ever seen me put my hands on somebody in praying for them? Hopefully, that was what Paul is talking about today: "Putting hands on somebody" to ask God to bless them.

- 4. From the start, Heb 1:1, Paul assumes familiarity with the OT- *not* just for the Jews (Rom 15:4)
  - a. Last time, we saw how critical OT washings are to understanding NT baptism
  - b. The same is true for laying on of hands, though, strangely, maybe a little less than for baptism. That is, the NT repeats enough of the OT to largely fill in for it.

## Laying on (or Imposition) of Hands OT

- F. **TRANSFER** seems to be a basic idea underlying all the types of hand-laying, OT or NT
- G. Of blessing
  - 1. Gen 48:14, Jacob blessed Joseph, v 15, also blessing his sons, one with each hand, v 20
  - 2. This type of hand-laying is repeated in the NT in Jesus blessing the children. Seeking a transfer of God's blessings.
- H. Of imputation
  - 1. The largest OT category. The worshiper or priest lay hands on the sacrificial animal's head, signifying the imputation, or transference, of the worshiper's sin onto the animal.
  - 2. Exod 29:10, 15. V 19 becomes a consecration (see J.), v 20-21.
  - 3. Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33, instructions for burnt offerings and sin offerings, presumably included *wherever* we read of these offerings

**Kid-speak:** What was the main kind of Putting-hands-on in the Old Testament? It was somebody putting their hands on an animal's head before they killed it as a sacrifice. What did that do? It said, "God, please let my sin go on this animal, just like my sin will one day go on Your Son."

- 4. Lev 8:14, 18, 22, of Aaron and sons during their consecration to office, but still of imputation
  - 5. Lev 16:21, Day of Atonement
  - 6. Num 8:12, in close connection with a hand-laying of consecration (see J.), Num 8:10
  - 7. Gill believes that this meaning is primarily intended in Heb 6:2, making it a Gospel reference, but not a rite we follow
- I. Of testimony
  - 1. Lev 24:14, the witnesses to a capital offense laying their hands on the perpetrator's head, apparently signifying their own non-participation- that the perpetrator alone was guilty. Transference again? 'We *didn't* participate'.
  - 2. Deut 13:9 and 17:7 seem in conjunction with this
- J. Of consecration
  - 1. Num 8:10, as mentioned above, followed by the Levites

- laying hands on a sin and burnt offering. Seeking a transfer of God's enablement.
2. Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9, all of Moses laying his hands on Joshua to consecrate him to his work. Filling with the **spirit of wisdom** previews the Spirit Himself conferred in NT.

## Laying on (or Imposition) of Hands NT

- K. Of blessing, Jesus of children
  1. Matt 19:13, 15; Mk 10:16.
  2. It says He blessed them. We assume a prayer of blessing.
- L. Of healing
  1. Only including use of the phrase itself. Not, for instance, when Jesus took the little girl by the hand, Mk 5:41; Matt 9:25. Still, the largest NT category.
  2. Lk 4:40, probably first chronologically
  3. Mk 5:23, thus the father knew of it
  4. Mk 6:5
  5. Mk 7:32 is a particular hand-laying, *including* fingers on ears, spitting, and touching the tongue
  6. Mk 8:23 also includes spitting
  7. Lk 13:13
  8. Mk 16:18, a promise for Jesus' disciples to be able to lay hands on the sick and make them well
  9. Acts 9:17, Ananias of Paul, though this one may also be of consecration (see M.), and conferring the Spirit (See O.)
  10. Acts 28:8, Paul healing Publius' dad, with praying first

**Kid-speak:** What are most of the Putting-hands-on someone in the New Testament? Mostly Jesus healing people- putting wellness on them.

- M. Of consecration
  1. Acts 6:6, The Apostles upon the newly selected 'deacons', having prayed
  2. Acts 13:3, prophets and teachers consecrating Saul and Barnabas, after fasting and prayer
  3. 1 Tim 5:22, though, in context, this one might fit better with the lone OT category of testimony, Lev 24:14
- N. So far, have we recognized any practice, parallel with baptism, which is a Church fundamental? Perhaps it is this:

★ O. Of giving/receiving the Holy Spirit

1. Acts 8:17 (v 18-19), after baptism, v 16, having asked, v 15
2. Acts 19:6, again, in connection with baptism, v 5
3. Baptism is the focal Christian teaching and practice **paired** with hand-laying in Heb 6:2
  - a. In Acts, they are paired real-time (not necessarily the same day)
  - b. Making this the prime candidate for the Heb 6:2 hand-laying, probably in conjunction with P.

**Kid-speak:** What kind of Putting-hands-on someone is Paul talking about in our verse today? Probably the Holy Spirit coming on us and in us.

P. Of the Spirit's gifting

1. 1 Tim 4:14, a special occasion, probably some time after his baptism, when Timothy was being confirmed as an elder
    - a. This occasion seems to be the same one referred to again in 2 Tim 1:6
    - b. In the first, the whole elderhood laid hands. In the second, Paul specifies his own hand-laying, perhaps giving the prophecy referred to in the former verse
    - c. (If different occasions, it wouldn't affect the outcome)
  2. Timothy received a specific "gift of God"
- Q. This reminds us of Hebrews 2:4
1. Heb 2:4 referred both to special Apostolic works ("signs and wonders, also various works of power") **and** (separately) to "the Spirit's distribution, according to His will."
  2. Now with Heb 6:2, we're inclined to connect its hand-laying to the Heb 2:4 "distribution"
  3. The two verses together answer one objection we might have had about the Holy Spirit's **INDEPENDENT** administration of His Cross-bought benefits to converts
    - ☞ a. He distributed them "according to His will"
    - ☞ b. *Yet* He did so via the laying on of hands
  4. Consider this analogy: there is no contradiction between *Spirit* baptism (joining us to Christ's body, 1 Cor 12:13) and *water* baptism.
    - a. Spirit baptism, as the *reality*, doesn't invalidate the *symbol* connected to it: water baptism.
    - b. Similarly, Spirit gifting, as the reality, doesn't invalidate

- the symbol connected to it: laying on of hands
- ✱ 5. H<sub>2</sub>O baptism is humanly dispensed, recognizing the convert's inclusion into an existing, earthly body of believers
    - ◆ a. After baptism, hand-laying perhaps signifies the body-of-Christ aspect of conversion *even more*, since the Spirit distributes gifts throughout the body specifically to complement one believer's gifts with another's, 1 Cor 12:11.
    - b. The *immediate* complement experienced is between the *hand-layer's* gift and the *convert's*. Most likely, the Spirit has conferred a “ministering” gift, 1 Pet 4:11 with Jms 3:1.

**Kid-speak:** If you just now believed in Jesus, what does God tell you to do to show that? Get baptized. *Then* what should we do next? The elder should pray and put his hands on you and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the gift or gifts He chose for you.

- R. Without Heb 6:2, we might have categorized the two Spirit-conferring hand-layings in Acts as special Apostolic gifts
  1. Acts 8 and 19 present *two* of the *three* ‘equalizing’ pourings of the Spirit, making SAMARITANS (1), Acts 8, then GENTILES (2), Acts 10, then OUTLIERS (3), Acts 19, equal participants in the Spirit with the Jews, Acts 2
  2. But there was no hand-laying in the GENTILE initiation into the Spirit, Acts 10. This discourages us from seeing hand-laying as solely an unusual Apostolic work.
  3. Do we infer that they laid hands later for individual gift?
- S. Responses
  1. Is our inattention to hand-laying indicative of our general relegation of the Spirit to a secondary and/or less personal tier of the Trinity?
    - a. Is the correct response to assure ourselves that the Spirit would certainly not make the laying-on-of hands a *condition* for His dispersal of gifts?
    - b. Hopefully we're uncomfortable with a similar objection to the necessity of baptism. Yes, baptism doesn't save us, but that doesn't demote it to an area of optional obedience
  2. Doesn't negligence of *any* precept invite interference in the transference of the Spirit's blessings? E.g., neglect of forgiving others can thoroughly interfere.
- T. I'd never read the Philadelphia Confession of faith of 1742 before. It's the 1689 London Confession (to which we

provisionally subscribe, along with the 1644) with two additions. Guess what one of the additions is.

1. Philadelphia Confession Chap 31 confesses the laying on of hands as a regular Christian practice. Who'd-a-thunk.
2. I hereby offer a 'rebate' to anyone I baptized who would like the laying-on-of-hands I omitted
  - a. Or *any* baptized person desiring imposition of hands
  - ‡ b. It would be (preceded and?) accompanied by prayer for the Spirit's will concerning His gifts
  - c. It wouldn't deny that gifts have been conferred, but maybe they've been hindered by our ignorance/ neglect

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")  
See. We're *all* always learning, growing.

V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong?**  
**How have I lost righteousness?**  
Has laying on of hands *not* been a fundamental for me?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**  
I will give laying on of hands its proper, fundamental place.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**  
Lord, help me see a definite connection between the Spirit's workings and my life.

Wrap-up: This is like Josiah discovering the mislaid Torah, 2 Kings 22:11. Such discoveries are repeatable in as many areas as we are ignorant and/or negligent. We should be grieved, like Josiah, even though our ignorance has become something of a recurrent norm.

May God graciously receive and guide our repentance in recovering Laying-on-of-Hands as the fundamental Christian teaching and practice it is.