

CHAPTER 21 – LAYING ON OF HANDS

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to familiarize the believers with the little-known doctrine that is foundational to the life of every believer and a source of impartation of great strength and blessing to the people of God when found in operation in the local church.

Key Verse:

*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, **2** Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.* Heb 6:1-6 (KJV)

I. What Spiritual Principles is behind the Doctrine of the Laying on of Hands?

God often uses a physical, material element as a channel through which to accomplish a spiritual work. In baptism, God commands the use of natural element (water) to effect a spiritual cleansing (Acts 22: 16). In healing, God encourages the use of oil to confer spiritual strength (James 5: 10). In both of these cases, the water and oil, in themselves, do nothing; but when they are used with the Word and with faith according to God's command they effect the desired results. When God chooses such a channel to use, He usually chooses a natural agent that is consistent with the spiritual work He wants to accomplish. Water is a natural cleansing agent; oil is a natural healing agent. God, however, uses these in connection with spiritual cleansing and healing.

II. What is the significance of the Hands in the Bible?

Certain natural things in the Bible clearly have a spiritual significance and application. God teaches spiritual truths with natural things (2 Corinthians 4: 18; Romans 1: 20). In the Bible, hands are seen to be connected with spiritual power and strength.

- a. The right hand of the Lord is seen as a source of power (Exodus 15: 6; Psalms 20: 6; Isaiah 62: 8).
- b. The hand of man is also seen as a source of power or strong aid (Psalm 76: 5).

III. What is the significance of the Laying on of Hands?

Throughout the Bible we see God using the hands of man in special ways and accomplishing various hands. The anointed hands become the channel, the vehicle, the bridge by which something is transferred, or transmitted, from one person to another. Three key words that are often associated with this concept are:

- a. Identification – Through the laying on of hands one party identifies, or associates, himself with the other.
 1. In the Old Testament, when the people laid their hands on the sacrificial animal that was to be killed, they were identifying themselves with that animal in its death (Leviticus 4: 24).
 2. When the people of Israel laid hands on their leaders they were identifying with them as God’s choice for them (Numbers 8: 10).
- b. Impartation – Through the laying on of hands one party imparts, or transfers, something to another.
 1. In the Old Testament, when the priests laid his hands on the scapegoats, the sins of the nation of Israel were imparted to the animal (Leviticus 16: 21 – 22).
 2. Paul told Timothy that he had imparted to him certain gifts through the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4: 14; compare Romans 1: 11).
- c. Confirmation – Through the laying on of hands one party confirms, or renders, the other party more firm. In other words, there is strengthening that takes place.
 1. The priests in the Old Testament would bless the people, lifting their hands toward them (Leviticus 9: 22).
 2. New Testament believers were confirmed, or rendered more firm, by the laying on of the hands of the leadership (Acts 14: 22).

IV. What are the ways in which we can see the Laying on of Hands operating in the New Testament Church?

- a. The laying on of hands is often used in connection with healing.
 1. In the ministry of Jesus (Luke 4: 40).
 2. In the ministry of the apostles (Acts 5: 12).
 3. In Paul’s ministry (Acts 28: 8).
 4. In the life and ministry of all believers (Mark 16: 18).
- b. The laying on of hands is used in confirming the Holy Ghost. (Acts 9: 17; 19: 6).

- c. The laying on of hands is used in connection with the impartation of spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 1: 6, 14; 1 Timothy 4: 14).
- d. The laying on of hands often functions in connection with prophesy (1 Timothy 1: 18; 4: 14).
- e. The laying on of hands is used to impart a blessing (Mark 10: 16).
- f. The laying on of hands is used in the sending out of ministries (Acts 13: 2 – 3).
- g. The laying on of hands is used by leadership in connection with the confirmation, appointment or ordination of various ministries (Acts 6: 6).

V. What cautions should be exercised in connection with the Laying on of Hands?

There are several cautions that are found in regard to the ministry of the laying on of hands.

- a. This is not something to be taken lightly or done suddenly. Because the act of laying on of hands is more than a mere outward symbol and there is, in fact, an impartation to and identification with the candidate, we must be very cautious in our use of this ministry.
- b. In every case, except in regard to healing, it was always the leadership who laid hands on the people. Perhaps because of the serious nature of many of these things, the novice is excluded from operating in such ministry.

Conclusion

We can expect that all of the uses of the laying on of hands found in the New Testament will find a place in the Church today. As the Church of Jesus Christ begins to partake of some of the rich inheritance that has been given us in Christ, we will begin to operate with power in spiritual realms. As we begin to use the tools that God has given us, we will see new hope for accomplishing the mission of the Church. God has not given us an impossible commission; but the only way the commission will be realized is as we use the equipment that God has provided for the task. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty! God is concerned that we wage a good warfare (1 Timothy 1: 18).