

Bible Study # 104
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Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 4: Laying on of Hands

This evening we **are continuing our Bible study series on the doctrines outlined in Hebrews 6.**

Hebrews 6:1-2, KJV, we're told, "Therefore leaving [or, going on from] the principles [the beginning words or the word of the beginning] 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, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." The foundation includes repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, and laying on of hands. **Laying on of hands is the fourth of these six doctrines.** The seventh, going on to perfection, is built on top of these.

We are going to look at the laying on of hands this evening. There is a lot that is involved in it. Sometimes we look at something like that and we think, 'What is there to the laying on of hands? What does that mean? Why is the laying on of hands such an important part of the foundation? Why would God list that as a part of very foundational material?'

In a very special way, the doctrine of the laying on of hands points us to the power of God and the importance of relying on that power. I think we will see that in each case, it is involved with something that is very directly tied in with God's grace being extended. We will notice that.

In looking at the laying on of hands, let's start back in the book of Leviticus. Let's start with something that we perhaps would not normally think of for the laying on of hands.

Leviticus 1:1-3, we will notice, "Now the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will [Jewish translation renders it, "to offer it that he may be accepted."] It was a freewill offering, but it was an offering of access to God.] at the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord.'""

How does he do that? He offers it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Eternal.

Verse 4, ""Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.'"" This is not just a matter of leaving it at the tabernacle of meeting; it involved laying on of his hand on this animal.

As we come on down, we'll notice a few examples in this section.

Leviticus 3:1-2, ""When his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers it of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.'""

Verses 7-8, ""If he offers a lamb as his offering, then he shall offer it before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of meeting; ...'""

Leviticus 4:2-4, ""Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "If a person sins unintentionally [KJV, "through ignorance"] against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them, if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering. He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the Lord.'""

Verse 6, this was to be done and the blood was to be sprinkled.

We could go back and notice numerous places that are there, but I think this suffices to show.

What was the significance of that? Why would you have the laying on of hands? Why would the laying on of hands be involved with the sacrifices?

Laying on of hands is a means of setting apart.

Something is set apart or designated in a special way. When these animals were brought as a part of the sacrifices, they weren't slaughtered as an animal that you were going to eat, although in most of the offerings, the offerer ate some of it. The priest ate some of it as well. It wasn't just taking an animal and slaughtering it. It involved a setting apart of that animal because that animal was set apart for a very special purpose, a very special reason.

Hebrews 9:22, Paul tells us, "...without shedding of blood there is no remission." By the shedding

of the blood of bulls and goats, there's no remission of sin.

Hebrews 10:3-4, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goat could take away sin." There is a reminder that is made from year to year. We are reminded that the penalty [wages] of sin is death. The laying on of hands was involved in terms of setting apart.

As the offerer came and brought an animal, he acknowledged his need for a Savior. When he brought an animal to be slaughtered that he might gain access to God [as in the case of the burnt offering] or that a sin might be atoned or an uncleanness removed, the offerer—by virtue of bringing that animal—acknowledged his need for a Savior. He acknowledged that he was a sinner cut off from God and needed a Savior. By bringing this animal that was a stand-in on behalf of the offerer, the offerer looked forward to and anticipated the ultimate stand-in that God would provide—Jesus Christ our Savior.

Verse 12, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God."

We find that the very first place the laying on of hands was used was to set apart the sacrificial animals—to set them apart for special service.

As I said, one thing that runs through is that God's grace is very much involved in each of these cases. Each of these areas of the laying on of hands has to do with God's grace being manifested or transmitted. In the case of the sacrificial animals, that certainly was an important aspect because the ultimate of God's grace and mercy for us is that He has provided a Savior for us. So, we see that the laying on of hands was used in that case.

Let's go back to Genesis 48 and notice in terms of time sequence, *the first place we read about the laying on of hands—Ephraim and Manasseh's blessings of birthright inheritance.*

This is a remarkable incident and one that, of course, has great prophetic significance. We find in Genesis 48 that Joseph had heard that his father (Jacob; Israel) was in a very serious condition. He was, of course, quite elderly. His health and his eyesight had deteriorated, and he had evidently taken to bed. When Joseph heard of it, he wanted to go down and visit with his father prior to his father's death. Evidently, he knew that time was drawing close for his dad. When he went, he took with him his two young sons, Ephraim and Manasseh and brought them before his father.

Genesis 48:2, when they told Jacob that his son Joseph was coming in, "...Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed."

That really got him excited, and he sat up and tried to be ready in anticipation of this visit.

Verses 3-4, Joseph came in and Jacob began to speak to him. He sort of went back to the beginning and began to recite the way that God had dealt with him over the years, the promises that God had made and the fact that he had never expected to see Joseph again. And now he not only saw Joseph but Joseph's sons.

Verse 5, "'And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.'" Ephraim and Manasseh were to be set apart in a special way—they were to inherit on the level of the sons of Jacob. They were, of course, grandsons. They were the only ones of the grandsons to inherit on this level. Joseph was, of course, the one for whom the birthright was to come. The birthright originally would have been Reuben's, but Reuben forfeited the birthright because of behavior on his part. In fact, I'll call your attention to it. You can hold your place in Genesis 48.

1 Chronicles 5:1-2 say, "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's..."

This makes it very plain that the birthright blessings went through Joseph and the scepter promise (the great line of rulership) came through Judah. We will see more details on some of that in Genesis 49, which we aren't going to go through in depth.

Anyway, Joseph brought Ephraim and Manasseh before Jacob. Jacob began to recite the circumstances of his life and bring things up to the present.

Genesis 48:9, finally, Jacob told him, "...Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."

Verses 10-12, "Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, 'I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!' So Joseph brought them from beside his knees,"

You sort of get the idea they were just little boys. You know they were young enough that, being

sort of intimidated and overwhelmed by what was going on, they did what little kids do—they sort of clung to daddy’s knee. They were a little bit intimidated and overwhelmed here. And this very elderly man—you read the account—was well past a hundred at this time.

Verses 13-14, “And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them near him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.”

This was not an accident. Obviously, it was something of great prophetic significance. That’s why it’s mentioned in detail. If there was no particular significance, then why is this account given in such detail?

Verses 15-16, “And he blessed Joseph, and said: ‘God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.’” A special blessing was being conveyed.

Verse 17, “Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; . . .” He thought, ‘Dad has gotten mixed up here. You know, Dad is old and can’t see. He’s gotten confused and he has the boys mixed up.’ So, he was going to stop him and switch his hands over because the right hand signified the greater blessing; the left hand, the lesser blessing. So, he started to say, ‘Well, wait a minute Dad. You’re mixed up here. Let me straighten you out.’ But Dad wasn’t mixed up. Dad may have been blind, but God was guiding Dad. Dad knew exactly what he was doing. It was not an accident; he was not confused. It was none of the things that Joseph sort of assumed.

Verse 18, “And Joseph said to his father, ‘Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.’” ‘Here, you need to put your right hand on his head.’

Verses 19-20, “But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.’ So he blessed them that day, saying, ‘By you Israel will bless, saying, “May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!”’ And

thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.” Here, a special blessing is conveyed.

Genesis 49:1, now it was in this context, “And Jacob called his sons and said, ‘Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days. . . .’” The clear implication is the fact that the tribes of Israel are to be identifiable all the way down to the last days. They’re separately identifiable and play a significant role in history.

All the details of chapter 48—the entire chapter—is devoted to the story of this elderly patriarch performing a special blessing through the laying on of hands on these two young boys who are probably overwhelmed and intimidated by the whole thing and don’t know what’s going on. It doesn’t say exactly how old they are, but I get the idea that they were very young. Joseph had to sort of push them out from behind his legs. You sort of get the idea of little kids who are about four or five years old and are sort of overwhelmed by being in this room and with this very elderly man. They know there’s a lot going on. They’re sort of intimidated by it and not sure that they want to get very far away from Dad. This is sort of the story you have here.

Here we have the laying on of hands being used to convey a special blessing—to set apart these two boys who ultimately became the father or the progenitors of two of the tribes of Israel. Ultimately, of course, Manasseh went on to become the United States and Ephraim the British Commonwealth nations—the birthright blessings that God outlined here. We don’t have time and the subject of the Bible study is not the birthright blessings. We’ve gone into that sort of thing many times in the past in sermons and other Bible studies. But we see the laying on of hands used.

Let’s notice one other example of the laying on of hands being used for the purpose of conveying a blessing. Notice *the second example that we see of the laying on of hands was used to set apart little children for a blessing—for God’s special blessing of grace.*

Matthew 19:13, you might notice, “Then little children were brought to Him [speaking of Jesus] that He might put His hands on them and pray, . . .” Why did they want Him to specifically put His hands on them? —Because the putting on of hands or laying on of hands signified a special setting apart. They brought them to Him for the laying on of hands that He would pray.

Verse 13, continuing, “...but the disciples rebuked them.”

Verses 14-15, “But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid hands on them and departed from there.”

Again, we see the laying on of hands used as an instrument of conveying God’s grace in the sense of a special blessing. Any blessing conveyed by God is certainly evidence of God’s grace because it is not based on what we have earned or deserved, but it is based on God’s mercy and blessing.

Let’s look at a third occurrence mentioned of the laying on of hands. We will go back to the book of Mark.

Mark 5:22-23, “And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.’”

Here we find ***a third use of the laying on of hands—the laying on of hands used in the context of physical healing.*** Jairus came and sought out Jesus Christ that He would lay hands on his little daughter that she could be healed. Of course, you remember the story in the remainder of chapter 5.

Verses 35-41, by the time they got there, the little girl was dead, but Jesus did raise her up and restore her to life. –A very dramatic miracle of healing.

Mark 6:1-3, “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ And they were offended at Him.”

‘Where does He get off saying all these things? How does He know so much? Why, we’ve seen Him grow up!’ –As though that proved something. Everyone has to grow up somewhere. But they sort of assumed, ‘Because we know His family, His brothers and sisters and we saw Him grow up, He obviously can’t be anyone all that important. How does He get off doing all these things?’

Verse 4, “But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’” They sort of take Him for granted.

Verses 5-6, “Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”

I want to call your attention here. Again, laying on of hands is mentioned in the context of healing. Something we ought to realize (in the context of healing) is that *healings take place in an atmosphere of faith.* What we have described here was an atmosphere of disbelief.

In fact, look back in Mark 5.

Mark 5:38-40, “Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, ‘Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying.”

The first thing Jesus did was to exclude all those who introduced this aura and climate of disbelief. He excluded them—got rid of them. They didn’t have a climate of faith. The father and the mother were looking to Him, and they wanted Jesus to heal their daughter. He brought Peter, James and John in with Him and He put the rest of them out. Once He did that, then He dealt with the issue.

There are many factors involved in healing. I don’t want to do a whole Bible study on healing this evening, but I think it is important as we note some of these things that healing, in particular, and miracles, in general, flourish in an atmosphere of faith and languish in an atmosphere of disbelief. Even Jesus Himself when He came to Galilee was not able to perform many miracles because people didn’t expect a miracle. They didn’t believe in that. They didn’t have particular regard for it. They doubted that He was really who He said He was.

Mark 6:5, we’re told, “Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”

We see this matter of what Jesus Himself did, and healing is addressed in the context of the laying on of hands.

In Mark 16, we find a detailed account of Jesus’ commission to the apostles and to the Church. We find various summaries of what is sometimes called the “great commission,” which was Jesus’ commission to His apostles and to His Church, which was to go forth and teach the gospel. Jesus

said more than one or two sentences. If we look at Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and even in the beginning of Acts, you find each of them brings in some details that the others didn't. Mark gives a more detailed account of what Jesus said in this context than you find in Matthew. Matthew 28:19-20 is generally quoted. But if you look in a harmony of the gospels, you'll find that Mark 16 is the parallel account and adds in some details that Matthew doesn't. Each of them is simply a summary. It's just a general, brief summary as to what was to be done.

Let's pick it up in Mark 16.

Mark 16:15-17, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned [or, shall be judged]. And these signs will follow those who believe: ...'"

In some modern translations, portions or all of verses 17-20 are left out or considered questionable. But these verses are in the overwhelming majority of Greek text—the Byzantine text. About 94 percent of all the Greek text, which was beneficially preserved in the Greek world, certainly includes this. In fact, there's even more evidence of it in terms of the authority of it because there are writers that were not themselves biblical writers but writers who quoted the Bible, even one as early as the second century who actually quotes some of these verses, showing, of course, that they were in the copy of the book of Mark that he had access to. There are various places where portions of these verses are quoted by some of the very earliest writers attesting to the fact that they were a part of the original manuscript. Some copyists at a later time deleted them primarily because these signs weren't followed. So, it was a reason to delete them or not add it in at a later time.

Verse 17, "And these signs will follow those who believe: ..."

Miracles—the laying on of hands to perform healing and things of that sort—were not something limited to Jesus Christ. Yes, it was an evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, but it was more than that. It was not simply limited to that. Christ told the disciples that they would work miracles that He worked and greater miracles, even to the point that Peter's shadow passing over a man caused him to be healed instantly (Acts 5:15). There were dramatic miracles that occurred in the book of Acts. The purpose of miracles and healings went far beyond only showing the Messiahship of Christ.

Verses 17-20, "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs."

Let's look at these accompanying signs. I want to comment on them. He says, "In My name shall they cast out demons." That, of course, is certainly the case. There are records of it in the book of Acts, and it's not something that ceased with the book of Acts. Down through the years, casting out demons has been a part of the signs that have been there and has been a part of God's confirming where He is working.

Probably any minister who has been in the ministry for a number of years has dealt with and, on occasion, has had to cast out demon spirits. I may give one or two examples on some of these situations—not to sit here and just sort of regale off stories one after another.

One that comes to my mind immediately involves a situation a number of years ago in Houston. There was a young lady who was a prospective member and had begun to attend Church. She had various problems. One evening I got a call. I was at a Spokesman's Club Ladies Night and got a call. They were trying to track me down. I left and went over to the home of the member where she was. She was a small, young lady. She was, I guess, about 19 and a small, young lady at that. There were four or five large men that had been doing their best to physically restrain her for about the last hour and-a-half, and they were much the worse in the situation. They were not simply dealing with a human being. There had been some demon problems in the past and this was the situation. They had been trying to restrain her to keep her from hurting herself and hurting them. Everything was in pandemonium when I got there. So, I told them to get away and turn loose. They were a little reluctant to do that. When I told them the second time, they moved quickly. She got up and I cast out the demon. Within just a matter of minutes or moments, she was just as normal as a person could be. She was just sort of passed out at the time and within just a matter of moments, she sat up. She was "herself" and was able to talk, ask questions or answer questions. In her

particular case, she went on to do the things that she needed to do spiritually and has grown and done very well since that time.

There are other situations that have had different long-term results. Christ gave the warning that when a demon is cast out, if the individual does not replace and put into his mind something positive—if he just leaves his mind an empty vacuum—sooner or later the demon will come back and bring others worse than him. Christ gives that parable (Matthew 12:43-45).

In terms of casting out demons—of having the power and authority over demon spirits—that is something that has been a sign that has followed and certainly has been very much the case all the way down into our time.

Secondly, it mentions *speaking with new tongues or with new languages*. This particular sign isn't one that has been manifested at this particular point or stage of the Church. But it is one that, in different circumstances and different times, God has utilized as an evidence of His power and His Spirit. It certainly was evidenced several times in the book of Acts and, very likely, according to certain prophetic indications in Joel, will be evidenced again prior to the return of Jesus Christ. It is something that undoubtedly has been manifested by God among His people at different times and places down through the centuries.

It mentions *taking up serpents*. We have a specific example of that in the book of Acts. Turn to the end of Acts—Acts 28:3-6. This isn't talking about snake handling like certain groups in Tennessee or Kentucky who are snake handlers. There is only one example in the Bible of this. In Acts 28, Paul and those who were with him (Paul was a prisoner in route to Rome) suffered shipwreck and finally escaped to the island of Malta (v. 1).

Acts 28:2-4, “And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, ‘No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.’”

When the people saw what happened, they immediately jumped to a conclusion. They said, ‘This guy must have been a murderer and thought he was escaping from the sea, but you know, he’s going to “get” his.’

Verses 5-6, “But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead; but after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.” This was an impulsive group of people given to jumping to conclusions. That’s the only exercise some people get—jumping to conclusions. They jumped to conclusions.

One of the things to realize, and that’s shown in the context, Paul didn’t go around looking for rattlesnakes to pick up and drape around his neck to prove that a snake couldn’t hurt him. This was a miracle of God and involved a circumstance that arose. Paul wasn’t tempting God. He wasn’t looking for trouble. He wasn’t trying to do something of this sort. It was simply something that occurred. A snake is specifically used in the Bible as symbolic of the devil, and I think God singled out the snake in this way.

Mark 16:18, we also find that it says, “...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” Again, this matter of laying on of hands. Again, the matter of *laying on of hands for healing*—of “laying hands on the sick, and they will recover.” God has demonstrated that. That is certainly a sign that has followed down through the ages.

We have to understand that there are various aspects in terms of healing, and certainly the matter of faith is an important part. It isn’t all that’s involved, but God has manifested this many times.

There are many specific examples that I can think of. I remember one that occurred a number of years ago in Kentucky. This was an older man. In fact, one of the reasons this one stands out in my mind is because it was one that my own father later found out about. I’ll tell you the story. It certainly served to impress a certain lesson upon my father. Even though he never came into the Church as a result of this particular incident, he did come to really understand some things about the laying on of hands and anointing and came to believe very much in that.

There was an older man down in Kentucky who called me one day (I think it was a Sunday). He told me of an accident that he had had and blood poisoning had set in. The red line had already moved well up his arm; he was very concerned and wanted to know if I would come and anoint him. And I did. He was about 75 miles from where I lived and I drove there. When I got there, the red line had proceeded all the way up to his shoulder. By that time, it had a very

striking appearance as it came up his arm. The blood poisoning had set in and looked very inflamed. We talked and I anointed and laid hands on him. As we sat there over a period of the next few minutes, he began to get relief immediately. I remained there probably the best part of an hour and in the course of that time, it was like watching the line on a thermometer—just down, down, down. This red line just began to disappear down his arm until the blood poisoning simply disappeared from his body. He was completely healed of the situation.

In fact, it's probably the only time my dad visited us while we were in Kentucky. He was there over a weekend and he came to Church on that particular Sabbath because he was visiting us and wanted to hear me speak. He had never heard me speak and he wanted to do so. While he was there, he met this particular man, who was a man about his own age, and they had similar interests. They both lived in the country and they struck up a conversation. My dad was the kind of person who enjoyed people; he enjoyed meeting people.

He was talking with this particular man, and, of course, this incident was very much on this man's mind. Since it had happened only a short time earlier (about two weeks earlier) and had been a very dramatic situation, he recounted the story to my dad in sort of a matter-of-fact way. I wasn't there to hear all the conversation. I know he recounted the story to my dad because my dad later asked me some things about it. He wanted to see some of the verses in the Bible that talked about that. My dad was very, very much impressed by that and even mentioned that particular man and the situation from time to time over the years. I know that, on at least a couple of occasions, he, himself, asked for anointing and prayer for particular problems that he had. God did intervene, have mercy and grant healing on some of those occasions.

God certainly demonstrated that down through the years, and the laying on of hands is very much a part of that. It isn't the presence of human hands that performs the healing, but that is the way God used in setting apart with anointing and the laying on of hands.

I remember one situation that was, again, a very dramatic healing that occurred in somewhat of an unusual way. This was when I was in Texas. I got a call one day from a young man down in the Rio Grand Valley of Texas. He was a young Mexican man who had not been in the Church for all that long. He had a little daughter about two years of age, perhaps slightly older, but

between two and three. He called me on the phone and I was at my home in Corpus Christi, which was about 150 miles away. He was very concerned because his daughter had appendicitis. His wife wasn't in the Church. All of his family was there and they were, of course, very concerned and very upset. They were upset with him because he wanted to take the time to call the minister. He wanted his daughter anointed and they thought, 'Well, this is crazy.'

So he called. He was on the phone and he had his little daughter with him. He really didn't know what to do. I said, 'Look, if I were to just immediately hang up the phone, it would take me a minimum of three hours to get to your home; your daughter is in a state that she needs something right now.' I said, 'God isn't dependent upon my physical presence. You are doing what it says in the Scriptures; you called for the elders. I can't be right there at this moment to lay hands on her, but I'll tell you what to do. Hold on to the telephone and have your little daughter there in your arms. You kneel down right where you are and I'm going to kneel down right here where I am. We're connected to one another by the telephone, but God is the One that we really need to be connected to. I'm going to lay claim to God's healing promise on behalf of your little daughter.' I did that. I prayed and laid claim on God's intervention at that point, and the little daughter was instantly healed in a way that was very dramatic to the family who was there.

They were greatly impressed by that. In fact, about a dozen of them showed up at Church the next Sabbath. They were all Catholic. The little Church in the valley was only about 75 or 80 people. When that dozen showed up, it really made quite a stir. They came about two weeks. That was about how long it took for the miracle to sort of wear off. At the moment they were deeply impressed, but it was sort of like the Israelites of old.

It really helped me to understand the situation in the book of Exodus where God worked these dramatic miracles and a couple of weeks later, people were complaining and complaining and bellyaching. They had forgotten everything that they had just seen God do. That's the tendency. It's sort of like, 'Well, what have you done for me lately? I know what you did last week, but what have you done lately?' Sometimes people think, 'Well, if I saw a dramatic miracle, it would solve the problem of faith for all time.'

The most dramatic miracle that I have personal knowledge of occurred to someone I know. It

occurred to a man who later wound up leaving the Church. He was a man who was a quadriplegic as a result of the Korean War. He had to be wheeled on a stretcher into Church every Sabbath there in Pasadena. He was totally paralyzed as a result of injuries in the Korean War. In fact, it had been quite an ordeal to baptize him. It took quite a number of men because they had to actually keep him on the stretcher in order to baptize him. Some of you older members probably remember hearing about this. Mr. Dick Armstrong, in this particular case, laid hands on this man and he was instantly and very dramatically healed. In fact, it was about the last thing Mr. Dick Armstrong did in his life before his life was cut short in an automobile accident. It was perhaps the most dramatic healing that has occurred in this age.

This man was completely raised up from complete paralysis. He went on to live a very productive life over the next 15 or so years. He served in the ministry. I had him as an instructor in college. He played handball and the whole works. He was a very dynamic and forceful individual. Later he became involved in certain problems and wound up ultimately turning aside from everything he had believed.

I mention it because sometimes we think, 'Well, if we had a dramatic miracle or if we saw a dramatic miracle, that would solve our problems of faith for all time.' No. What solves our problems of faith for all time is walking with God day by day. Faith is something you have to drink in from God's Spirit day by day. You can see the most dramatic miracle in the world one day and then a few days go by. As time goes by, your mind begins to sort of lose track of how dramatic it was.

Faith is certainly an important part of the laying on of hands for healing. There are many, many places that we could go—many other scriptures. We might notice just a very few.

Luke 5:12-13, "And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy left him."

We could go through other accounts. We could look in the book of Acts. There are numerous accounts. We might just notice one or two. In Acts 9, we'll notice a situation involving the time the Apostle Paul was converted. Paul was struck down. God wanted Paul's attention and

struck him down with this bright light that blinded him. He was literally blind. He remained blind for three days (vv. 3-4, 9).

Verses 10-11, God sent Ananias, who was a disciple there in Damascus, to go to Paul and to baptize him. We find that Ananias was told that he was to go do this.

Acts 9:17-18, "And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized." Here again, the laying on of hands was involved.

In James 5, we are also given to understand that in the case of healing, we not only lay hands on someone, but we also anoint with oil.

James 5:14-15, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick," In the case of healing, we anoint an individual and lay hands upon him following the instructions here and in other places.

We already read the account in Acts 28, but after this incident where the serpent's bite had not harmed Paul, we find that the ruler of this group of people was a man by the name of Publius.

Acts 28:8-9, "And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed."

This was a sign that has followed. It has certainly been evidenced in more dramatic ways at some times and in less dramatic ways at other times. God sometimes heals very instantly and dramatically. Sometimes God heals in ways that are perhaps not quite as dramatic—in ways that may involve a gradual recovery. There are various factors that get into the subject of healing, and I don't want to get off into that too much except to show that *this is a manifestation of God's grace, God's beneficence, His kindness, His mercy and conveyed through the laying on of hands.*

The fourth example of the laying on of hands involves the receiving of God's Holy Spirit at the time of baptism.

We'll pick up the story in Acts 8.

Acts 8:5, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.” He explained who the Messiah was.

Verses 6-8, “And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”

Verse 9, we read of a man by the name of Simon the magician or Simon the sorcerer.

Verse 12, “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ [The name of Jesus Christ signifies His authority, His rank, His position, the things that relate to Him and what God did through Him. Philip explained a number of things.], both men and women were baptized.”

Verses 14-17, “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them and that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He [It] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” We find that following baptism, the example of the laying on of hands is given. God offers His Spirit at that time.

We have a specific example, and an unusual example, because normally the laying on of hands is performed right after baptism. There’s one example in the Scriptures that is very unusual because it is the only account of people receiving the Holy Spirit before they were baptized. Normally, the Holy Spirit is given through the laying on of hands after baptism. There’s one account where the Holy Spirit was given prior to baptism, and that’s found in Acts 10. This is the story of Cornelius and the first Gentiles who were converted.

Peter began to speak to Cornelius and his household. Of course up until this time, no one who was uncircumcised had been baptized in the Church. The only Gentiles who had been baptized were Gentiles who had previously undergone the ritual of conversion to Judaism and who were themselves circumcised. You have to realize circumcision symbolized God’s covenant with Abraham. It symbolized what was necessary for access to God. It was a very difficult hurdle for the Jews to get past—to accept the fact that an individual who had not undergone this rite and taken upon himself the

sign of the covenant of Abraham could have access to God.

Acts 10:44-48, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

God performed this dramatic miracle to make a point. Peter at this point said, ‘Look, God has accepted them. Who are we to refuse them? Can anybody say we should not go ahead and baptize them?’ At that point, nobody was prepared to say that.

By the time they got back to Jerusalem, some wanted to discuss the matter. The gift of tongues was not something that was automatically given when an individual received the Holy Spirit, but God performed the same miracle that He had at the time when the Holy Spirit was first given in Acts 2 because He didn’t want the Jews saying that it had been second-rate for the Gentiles. ‘Yeah, well, they may have gotten It, but they didn’t get It as good as we did.’ You know, since human beings like to compare, He gave the very same gift. And it struck them, ‘He’s poured It out on them the same as on us.’ So, at that point, they recognized that God had accepted them. This was the only exception to that because normally the Holy Spirit is only given after baptism through the laying on of hands. *There’s a reason why the laying on of hands follows baptism rather than precedes it.* Baptism symbolizes a cleansing, a washing away of sin. God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. *First, we become clean and then God comes to dwell in us through the Holy Spirit.* There’s symbolism that’s involved.

Let’s notice one other example in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:6-7, Paul says to Timothy, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” It’s a gift that you stir up. ‘The gift of God which is in you by the putting on of my hands.’ In this case, Paul can say to Timothy, ‘You have the Holy Spirit as a result of laying my hands on you.’

The Holy Spirit that God gives is not a spirit of fear, but it is the spirit of power and of love and of sound-mindedness. The Holy Spirit that God gives through the laying on of hands is a spirit of power. The word “power” is “*dunamis*” in Greek; it’s the same word we get our English word “dynamic.” “*Dunamis*” means “power” and in particular, “miraculous power.” It’s the word that’s used in the New Testament that’s generally referring to miracles or miraculous power. So, God’s Spirit is the spirit of miraculous power, the spirit that makes possible the performance of miracles—casting out demons, healing the sick and all of the things that God does. God’s spirit is the spirit of miraculous power.

It’s also the spirit of love. It’s the spirit of love because it reflects God’s very nature. It’s the spirit of miraculous power. It’s the spirit of love. It is the spirit that transforms us. It sheds abroad in our heart the love of God (KJV, Romans 5:5)—the love of God that is His nature (1 John 4:7-8). It involves the fulfilling of the law in the true sense—in the spirit of the law (1 John 5:3). God’s Spirit is the spirit of miraculous power. It is the spirit of love and the spirit of sound-mindedness—of wisdom and balance.

This is something worth giving consideration to—*three things that summarize what we receive from God’s Spirit*. *One* is miraculous power as a result of God’s Spirit. *Second* is the transformation of our nature as a result of God’s love. The fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)—all these things are the result of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reflects God’s miraculous power. It reflects and is involved in the transformation of our nature. *Third* is the spirit of sound-mindedness—of balance and wisdom. It gives us that proper perspective.

God’s Spirit is to be stirred up. We have it as a result of the laying on of hands. God’s grace is manifested in a very remarkable way with imparting to us His nature. His Holy Spirit seals us and sets us apart. It authenticates us as His own.

The fifth and final example of the laying on of hands involves ordination. If you look up the word “ordained” (particularly in the original language) you’ll find that it’s a term that means “to commission.” An ordination was a commission. If they were ordained, it involved giving a charge or a commission to someone, and this was done through the laying on of hands.

Numbers 27:18-19, we find, “And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate [KJV, “give him a charge”] [a commission; a job] him in their sight.’”

You can find what that commission was in Joshua 1 where God rehearses it to Joshua.

Joshua 1:7, “‘Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.’” That was his charge, his commission or his ordination, if you please.

Numbers 27:23, we’re told, “And he [Moses] laid his hands on him [Joshua] and inaugurated him [KJV, “gave him a charge”], just as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.” –An example of someone who was ordained or set apart in that way.

Coming back to the New Testament, notice in Acts 6:1-5 where seven men were selected out to take care of a particular matter. There had arisen problems concerning the distribution of certain goods to the widows. There were problems and complaints. The apostles said, ‘Look, this is an important matter and needs to be looked after, but we have our commission that is to go forth preaching the gospel. Christ gave us our commission, and we can’t leave that to go and tend to all these physical things and spend our time waiting on tables. We can’t do both. It’s not fitting that we should leave the commission that Christ has given us and tend to this.’ So, they made the decision that seven men were to be selected who were full of God’s Holy Spirit and appointed them over this matter. This is, of course, the first ordination of deacons.

Acts 6:6, “whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.” So, they were set apart or ordained through the laying on of hands.

In Acts 13, we have another example.

Verse 1, we find that there were some prophets who had come down from Jerusalem.

Acts 13:2-3, “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

This is the account of Paul and Barnabas being ordained as apostles. Again, it was through the laying on of hands. –Clear examples, in terms of this setting apart.

We will notice one other example in 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy 4:12-14, Paul told Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery [elders].” “Presbytery” is a Greek word that means “elders.” Usually it’s translated as elders. Here it’s spelled out in the Anglicized form of the Greek word itself.

Timothy had a special gift in him through the laying on of the hands of the elders—his ordination. He was to be an example and to take heed to his ministry. He was told not to neglect the gift that he had as a result of the laying on of hands. Again, God’s grace was manifested in this way to an individual being set apart and endowed with a special measure of God’s Spirit and the certain things that were to be done.

Let me call your attention to something that is sort of an aside. If you do a little study on it, we find that in the case of healing, anointing is used with the laying on of hands and not with any of these others. They didn’t anoint the sacrificial animals. They didn’t anoint someone to convey a blessing. You’re not anointed to receive God’s Spirit at baptism. We don’t anoint someone when they’re ordained.

But anointing is mentioned in one other case. There were two ordinations that were done by anointing rather than by the laying on of hands. Do you know who they were? One was the ordination of Aaron as the high priest. You read about that in Leviticus 8. In Leviticus 8, you read the story of where Aaron was ordained or set apart as the high priest.

Leviticus 8:12, “And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to sanctify him.”

We find the second example of David in the book of 1 Samuel.

1 Samuel 16:1, Samuel was told, “...Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite.”

Verse 12, we find that David was selected.

Verse 13, “Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.”

The high priests of Israel and the kings of Israel were set apart by anointing. Every other office was by the laying on of hands. Do you know why the high priest and the king were set apart

by anointing? It’s sort of an aside to the Bible study, but I think it’s an interesting point. The word “Christ” in the Greek language and the word “Messiah” in the Hebrew language have the same meaning. They mean “the Anointed One.” The very name of the Christ or the Messiah was “the Anointed One.” Christ combines the two offices because He’s our King and our High Priest. The king and the high priest in their official function were both types of the Messiah and, in that sense, they were both anointed ones. They were set apart by anointing with oil and, in that sense, their offices were a type of the office of the Messiah. He will be the ultimate High Priest forever and the ultimate King of kings. God uses that symbol in a different way for those two offices. Anointing was unique to those offices. It wasn’t used for any of the other offices. It was used for those two because those two, in a very special way, typified the role of the Messiah. Normally, ordination didn’t involve anointing, but it did involve the laying on of hands.

We see here, again, that God worked through individuals, and we find that the laying on of hands involves a setting apart: 1) In the case of the sacrificial animals being set apart, it points toward the Savior. 2) In the case of conveying a blessing, it sets an individual apart as a recipient of a special blessing from God. 3) In the case of healing, it sets an individual apart to receive God’s miraculous healing. 4) In the case of after baptism, it sets an individual apart to receive God’s Holy Spirit to dwell in him. 5) In the case of ordination, it involves a setting apart to fulfill a commission and responsibility that devolves on that individual.

So, with that, perhaps this evening you have a little better overview of this doctrine of the laying on of hands, what is involved with it and why it is one of the foundational doctrines that is given in Hebrews 6. This completes the fourth of these six foundational doctrines.

Next time we will go on to the resurrection of the dead. With that, we’ll be concluded this evening. I look forward to seeing you on the Sabbath. Good night.