

Elementary Doctrines Laying On Of Hands

Studio Session 37

Sam Soleyn

01/2004

There are elementary doctrines that stay with us all of our lives. There are things that we should know, that should be so much a part of our thought process, in fact, so deeply imbedded in us, that they might not even arise to the conscious level, it's just how we will react, or what we know to do in particular situations. These elementary doctrines are established for us in the **6th chapter** of the book of **Hebrews**. They include: repentance from acts that lead to death, faith toward God, baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.” – Hebrews 6:1,2)**)

It is like these are the “fabric”; these are woven within the fiber of our understanding as believers. You see our faith is not based upon a rational, or human-originated process. We are born again, and we are born into eternal life. The Holy Spirit gives our spirits life and we become new creations in Christ. That being so, our way of life is very different from how humans ordinarily live. These elementary doctrines are about the elemental fabric of this new way of life and being, and just as, say, citizens of a particular country, we know about the history and the customs and the culture of that country. And we were raised in these things and they become as though it were, second nature to us. We instinctively revert to these points of view.

In the same way—being a believer—we are born of a different country, as it were. Not of a human country or a physical country but of an eternal origin and these elementary things are very basic to how we see ourselves and what we do—what we know, what we understand and how we are identified in this new way—being this new sort of creature. In the order in which they have appeared we have looked at the elementary doctrines and

now we are at the point of considering the doctrine of the laying on of hands. Now that's something that seems almost archaic; it seems almost out of keeping with the culture and the customs of our present time but the laying on of hands is a very, very central part of the life of a believer, and that is to have hands laid on you for various things. Now there are a number of things in Scripture that are accomplished through the laying on of hands. First off, the laying on of hands—that is, other believers laying hands on you is at times done to confirm things in you, sometimes to release you to various things, sometimes hands are laid on you for healing and so on. So this laying on of hands by itself is very much a foundational thing.

I'd like for us to begin by looking at some of the things that are facilitated through the laying on of hands and I'd like to jump right in and take sort of a “big picture” approach. In the Kingdom of God, the laying on of hands appears to be in Scripture for two basic reasons. There are other reasons but the two principle reasons are: to confirm who you are in the Lord and to commission you, or to send you. They are two separate things, though at times they may occur at the same time. For example, if you are being both confirmed *and* sent. But sometimes you are not being sent anywhere or you are not being released to something but the thing that you *are* is being acknowledged and it is being confirmed.

Now let's look at some examples of this in the Scriptures, just to establish it, and then what we will do is explain why. First let's look at **Acts 13**. Here it is said that in the church that was in Antioch there were prophets and teachers and it names five of them including Barnabas and Saul. Now in approaching this passage let me ask you this question: When do you think Saul became an apostle? The answer, typically, is “on the road to Damascus.” But you will not find an example of Paul being called an apostle before the **14th chapter** of the book of **Acts**. He was saved, selected, called to God on the road to Damascus, later baptized, but for fourteen years he disappears. Then he surfaces again in the **12th chapter** of **Acts** and now we see him after a year in residence in Antioch; we catch up with him in **Acts 13**. Now he is numbered here among these five and it says, **“While they (these five, including Barnabas and Saul) while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”** So the Holy Spirit had a work for them to do. **“So after they (the five) had fasted and prayed, they place their hands on them and sent them off.”** Now after this it says, **“The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia...”** and they go through places like Cyprus and so on. (Inserted – **Acts 13:2-4a**)

Now in **Acts 14**, we will find this: **Acts 14:4**, it says, **“The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.”** Now this is the first reference to Paul as an apostle. Now what exactly happened here? How did he go from being whatever he was to being an apostle? Well what was he before? Look back at

chapter 13, verse 1, (Acts 13:1a), “In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers.” And it names five of them including Barnabas and Saul. So until this time, he is not referred to as an apostle, he is referred to as either a prophet or a teacher. Now he has never elsewhere referred to himself as a prophet but he has elsewhere referred to himself as a teacher, so we know that at least here he is referred to as a teacher.

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, that’s when the Holy Spirit said, “Separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So that’s the first time that we actually see that there is a particular calling of Saul and he is supposed to be sent on his way as an apostle. In that sense, you may find yourself functioning in one capacity or another until a designated time when the Holy Spirit decides it is time both to reveal your calling to you and to release you into that calling. When that moment arrived for Paul it was while he was here in Antioch and up until that time he had been functioning as a prophet or a teacher or both. But then the Holy Spirit said, “Separate two of them from the rest of them.” And what happened then was that hands were laid on them—presumably the other three laid hands on them—to confirm that they were being separated out from what they used to be, confirm what it was that the Holy Spirit had declared that they were and then they were released to go into the work to which they were called, which was, of course, the work of apostles.

Now this is not a unique, or singular experience in the Scriptures relative to somebody working in a certain capacity and then the time came for the Holy Spirit to establish them in something else and what they had become. Another example of this is found at the end of the **16th chapter** of the book of **Acts** and it concerns a young apostle whose name was Timothy. Let’s begin by seeing what was the commissioning of Timothy. In the **16th chapter of Acts, at verse 1**, Paul—after his breakup with Barnabas over the question of John Mark’s accompanying them on the second journey—he now comes to Derbe and to Lystra essentially to look for the replacements for both Mark and Barnabas and he will find two men—Timothy and Sylvanus, who was also known as Silas, and these would be the replacements. Timothy for John Mark and apparently Silas for Barnabas, so when Paul is in this process he comes to Derbe and to Lystra and that’s where we find him in **Acts 16:1, “where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area...”** (Inserted – **Acts 16:1b-3a**) And then it goes on to say that they were sent out from these regions of Derbe and Lystra.

Let me show you that Timothy was an apostle: in **I Thessalonians, chapter 1**, the writers of the book were established. **Verse 1, of chapter 1**, the writers are stated, **“Paul, Silas and Timothy.”** So we are following on as a logical sequence from **Acts 16**, where the company is formed and they are going out and they’ve gone to the Thessalonians, they’ve worked with them and now they are writing a letter to them. So

in **chapter 1, verse 2**, when the reference is **“We always thank God for all of you,”** the “we” there would be Paul, Silas and Timothy. (Inserted – **I Thessalonians 1:2a**) Now in **chapter 2, verse 6**, **“We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.”** – **I Thessalonians 2:6,7**)

Now, who are the apostles of Christ? Obviously the writers: Paul, Silas and Timothy. So they began their work as apostles and they continued their work as apostles. Now how do we get to that? How do we see all of that? Paul writes to Timothy—both in the first letter and in the second letter—and he says to him, “I write to you Timothy,” in both the first letter to Timothy and the second letter to Timothy he says, “I write to you to fan into flames the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”** – **I Timothy 4:14 KJV**) And then he says, “I write to you to stir up the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands.”—in both the first letter and the second letter. (Inserted – actual verse—**“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”** – **II Timothy 1:6**) Now what exactly happened? Well, Timothy was in these two cities: Lystra and Derbe—working in those cities. He was known among the elders of those cities as a faithful worker but then Paul came through and was looking for a traveling companion to replace Mark and to replace Barnabas and he found both Timothy and Silas and this company is formed and they go out.

But filling in the blanks from Paul’s own letters to Timothy—**I and II Timothy**—we come up with the clarity of what happened. Paul was looking for his traveling companions; the elders of both cities recommended Timothy, and in the company of Paul there was a prophetic utterance declaring that Timothy was an apostle. We’ve looked at **I Thessalonians** and we’ve seen that he *was* an apostle, so his gift is declared by a prophetic utterance, according to Paul and then first the elders, and then together with Paul laid hands on him and sent him off onto the journey. The point of the laying on of hands then, is a confirmation of who Timothy was and a release of Timothy into the work to which God had called him.

So it is the same picture with Paul as it was with Timothy, that is: they were doing something else, the moment arose when, in the timing of the Lord it was time for them to be confirmed in their calling as apostles. So there was a prophetic utterance in both cases—both in Paul’s case and in Timothy’s case—a prophetic utterance, and it was followed by the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands then was a confirmation of a prophetic utterance by those who already knew what the nature of the work of Paul and Timothy, was. So this is an important truth about the laying on of hands: you do not lay hands on

someone and, by that, you make them into something. Before hands are laid on someone, first, the nature of the work that they are doing should be apparent; it should be clear. Secondly, those who lay hands on that person should be familiar with the work of that person, and then finally, when hands are laid, it is the declaration by those persons of what they know to be true about the work and the calling of this individual

In this way, we are not conferring some “benefit” on another, nor are we applying favoritism in selecting whom we please to be whatever we want them to be. The laying on of hands therefore, must be in light of the known work of that person upon whom hands are being laid. It is therefore a matter of confirmation by many, of who the “one” is—or even the confirmation by *another* of who that person is. In that way, we are not simply applying favoritism, nor are we selecting people to fit our version of their tasks. It is in fact, recognizing a greater trend. That trend is that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth; that He sent the Holy Spirit to endow His people with gifts of His authority. The evidence that you have been called to be who you are, is the way that you function in light of who God made you to be. So if, for example, someone is going around winning people to the Lord, the likelihood is that they are called to evangelize.

Well before you lay hands on someone and name them an evangelist, what must have preceded them? The evidence that the distribution of Jesus’ authority to them by the Holy Spirit, is manifested in terms of what they do. So if someone has been evangelizing, you know that, by the will of God, they were made to be an evangelist, that the Holy Spirit has empowered them to evangelize, and the fruit is that they actually win people to the Lord. When all of those things are in place then the confirmation that comes is to establish who they are in the Lord. Now, as in the case of both Timothy and Silas, what we see is that they were doing the work before hands were laid on them. But also we see that, having done the work for a sufficiently long period of time, it was now time for them to leave a certain location and go out beyond their borders. Or it was time for them to leave a particular context and move into another. When it is time to do that, the laying on of hands is also for the purpose of commissioning and releasing.

So in the first case, the laying on of hands is for the purpose of confirmation: that that gift actually is in this person, or that this person actually is who he says he is, in the Lord. That’s the testimony of those who observe the fruit of their labors and on the basis of that can concur that this is who they are by the will of God and by the work of the Holy Spirit; they’ve been endowed with a sufficient power from on high so that they can be that. One of the strange things is how often is the case that people who have been doing the work for a very long time have never been confirmed, let alone released to it. Part of the reason for this is that in the present church hierarchy there is only room for the pastor; there is only room for those leaders who have charge and that’s because the present church culture is largely about maintaining the structure and the order of that culture first and foremost.

The Kingdom of God, however, is very different from this. In the Kingdom, leadership exists for the benefit of the people and the point of leadership is that they are supposed to raise up the people with the expectation that the gift of God in them, and the call of God upon their lives will come to that place of sufficient maturity so that they can first be confirmed—as a result of the faithful work that has been done—and then subsequently they can also be released. You know, that’s how you come to be in ministry. Ministry is not the result of your having gone and spent years in college preparing for it because the ministry that you are to do is the work of the Holy Spirit being done *in you* and the work of the Holy Spirit being done *through you*. And the preparation for that is your faithful response to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

When you’ve done that over a period of time, you become versed in functioning in this way. When that is true then, as in the case of Timothy, the elders and an apostle ought to lay hands on you and release you to your calling. When you do, an anointing greater than what you used to have will come upon you and accompanying that anointing will come an attack because the enemy wants to stop you while you are just getting started. That attack will fail, as it inevitably does but when the attack fails, yet the anointing that’s on you will abide and that’s how you come to a greater level of glory, a greater level of maturity and functionality in the Kingdom of God. The doctrine, then, of the laying on of hands is, for a number of reasons—the two reasons we’ve covered in this particular broadcast are for confirmation and for release. We’ve seen in a previous broadcast that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is also conferred by the laying on of hands and we’ve mentioned that healing is done when the elders meet and pray over you, anoint you with oil, lay hands on you, forgive your sins, and then the Lord, by His choosing, heals you. The doctrine of the laying on of hands, then, is of great importance and its restoration to the body of Christ cannot be too soon. When the enemy accuses you, that which *stands* is the fact that you’ve been confirmed in the Lord as to who you are and what you are. I’m Sam Soleyn, God bless you and I’ll see you next time.

Scripture References:

Acts 13:2-4a

Acts 14:4

Acts 13:1a

Acts 16:1b-3a

I Thessalonians 1:1a

I Thessalonians 1:2a

I Thessalonians 2:6,7

I Timothy 4:14

II Timothy 1:6