

The Book of Hebrews

Part XIII: Take Hold of the Spirit (Heb. 6:1-2)

I. Our Destiny as Priests to the Nations

The book of Hebrews is unveiling the glorious truth of our High Priest—Jesus Christ, a priest in the order of Melchizedek. What we're finding now is that the book is preparing us to arise as a holy priesthood under his leadership.

We are those who are called to be teachers of salvation to the world. This is what it means to be a "priest" and what it means to move from the "milk" to "solid food," as we saw in Hebrews 5.

2 Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. 4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(1 Peter 2:2-5)

The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews were used to priests who did animal sacrifices (and they were being tempted to go back to that religious system). So, the author is writing to them and calling to make a new kind of "sacrifice." Hebrews ends up defining these sacrifices at the end:

15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. 16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

(Hebrews 13:15-16)

Again, this is about the "solid food" of doing the Father's will through living a life of gratitude, joy, praise, and doing good to people, sharing, etc.

In other words, we are to be so overwhelmed by the milk of the Gospel (which means drinking and tasting the incredible kindness and sweetness of God), that we are overflowing with joy and blessing to others.

Each of us have a unique role to play in the Kingdom as a priest to the nations with unique "sacrifices" of good works (which according to Ephesians 2 were prepared for us before the world was even made). But we cannot experience this unless we're standing on the right foundation.

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of

**instruction about washings (literally: “baptisms”) and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.
(Hebrews 6:1-2)**

Here is the same verse from another translation:

**1 Now is the time for us to progress beyond the basic message of Christ and advance into perfection. The foundation has already been laid for us to build upon: turning away from our dead works to embrace faith in God, 2 teaching about different baptisms, impartation by the laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.
(Hebrews 6:1-2 TPT)**

This is *not* saying we should leave the basic teachings of the Gospel. This means we are so rooted in the Gospel that we are now advancing into love. We’re so rooted in grace that we’re now blossoming with the good fruit and work of the Spirit.

To “*press on to maturity*” or “*advance into perfection*” is to move onto that solid food of doing the Father’s will, which means being a priest to the nations—just like our High Priest Jesus.

- **Note:** The word here for “maturity” (or perfection) in Hebrews 6:1 is used only one other time in Scripture: “*Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity*” (Colossians 3:14). This helps settle the fact that progressing in the faith is about growing in love, unity, and the fruit of the Spirit.

II. The Threefold Foundation

With this, the author wants to make sure the foundation is clear. He lays out three pairs of truths that form our spiritual foundation:

**1 ... let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings (“baptisms”) and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.
(Hebrews 6:1-2)**

1. *Repentance from dead works and faith toward God*
2. *Instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands*
3. *The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment*

Without these realities in place, we cannot advance into maturity and walk out our priestly destiny as full-grown sons and daughters of God. This is the meaning of the root word behind of

“maturity” (or “perfection”). It means **“of full age.”** This is all about become a mature son or daughter of God who is carrying on the Father’s business.

“Repentance from dead works and of faith toward God”

This first part is basically restating the entirety of the letter. The Hebrew readers were being tempted to turn back to “dead works” to find peace with God. The author is saying it’s time to move beyond that issue. You do not *do* works to please God or earn his love and forgiveness. Instead, you are called rest in the truth that you’re already loved and forgiven.

Forgiveness and redemption are gifts that already belong to you. Therefore, salvation is when a person accepts and takes hold of the gift for themselves. That’s the *“faith toward God”* part. A person turns away from their own works and takes hold of God’s work—and his love for them at the cross. They receive it for themselves.

The word for “receive” used throughout the New Testament is ***lambanō***. This is a common Greek term that was used often in reference to *taking something that belongs to you* (see Strong’s Concordance #G2983).

“Faith toward God” is trusting in what he’s done and what’s already been given—forgiveness, grace, and redemption. You’re *taking hold* of it. (See Acts 10:47 and Romans 5:17, both of which use this term.)

This is the foremost part of the foundation. This is the cornerstone of the entire structure we build our life on. Jesus has done all the work—our part is to simply trust in it and *take the gift*.

Reminder: This is the root of the word translated as Jesus’s “devotion” or “piety” from Hebrews 5:7. Jesus is one who literally “took hold well.” It says that he learned this through suffering, which shows us that *receiving* our salvation is an ongoing reality.

- Salvation is not something you gain or lose. Salvation is an ever-present reality that you are either trusting in or losing faith in and isolate yourself from God’s love.

III. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

“Instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands”

The second part is an overflow of the first. Once someone has trusted in God for salvation, they are invited to be *baptized*.

But this passage puts “baptism” in the plural. The New Testament speaks particularly of two baptisms we are called to experience when we receive salvation. We are called to be baptized in water as a sign of our receiving salvation, and we’re called to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

(Acts 1:4-5)

Interestingly, before Jesus said those words, he had already given the Holy Spirit to the disciples:

21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

(John 20:21-22)

So, the disciples already received the Holy Spirit in John 20 before the Holy Spirit fell upon them in the book of Acts. This speaks to this reality in the New Testament that there is a special encounter or "baptism" of the Holy Spirit apart from an initial experience of coming to God.

When we come to God and receive Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit as well because Jesus and the Spirit are one. You cannot divide the Trinity. So, when a person receives Christ and his salvation, they receive (or "take hold of") all of God into their life. When this happens, they are called to be baptized in water. This baptism represents our death and resurrection with Christ. We are new creations risen with Christ and we have all of God with us and in us. This is what we are to receive and be baptized into.

However, according to what we see in Acts, there is another "baptism" involving the Holy Spirit coming upon a person in a special way. We have to go back to Acts 1 and look further at Jesus's words to his disciples to understand this:

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

(Acts 1:8)

This "baptism of the Spirit" is about receiving power to become a witness. In other words, to become a priest to the nations and fulfill our eternal calling.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

(Acts 2:4)

This group who had already received the Spirit, now had the Spirit come upon them in power, and they started speaking in tongues as a result.

When the Holy Spirit fell in Jerusalem on the feast of Pentecost, there were 120 believers gathered together. Amazingly, there's a story in the Old Testament where a cloud of God's glory fills the temple in Jerusalem in the presence of 120 priests (2 Chronicles 5:11-14).

The baptism of the Spirit is where God gives someone a fresh empowerment to become a priest.

Now, a priest is called to bring reconciliation between humanity and God—and also amongst humanity itself (reconciliation with one another through forgiveness). We're called to bring unity in Christ amongst the nations.

We live in a divided world, a reality that gets highlighted in the book of Genesis in the story of Babel. This was where a clear division took place through a breakdown in language. People were divided into different languages and couldn't interact anymore—the result of the world pursuing unity outside of God.

This is why the main sign of someone being baptized in the Spirit to be a minister or priest of reconciliation is something called “the gift of tongues.” We also see this many times throughout the book of Acts. Here is another example through the ministry of Paul:

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

(Acts 19:5-6)

Paul leads a small group of men into the truth of Jesus. After they are baptized in water—“*in the name of the Lord Jesus*”—Paul then lays hands on them (which is why “*baptisms and laying on of hands*” are part of this same foundation), they start speaking in tongues and declaring heavenly truth.

This gift of tongues has two manifestations. It can be another human language you previously didn't know. This is what happened in Acts 2. It also comes out as a heavenly language of an angelic dialect. This is because we're not only reuniting humanity; we are also reuniting the heavenly realm with the earthly realm.

This is why Paul talks about the gift of tongues in two ways in 1 Corinthians 13:

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

(1 Corinthians 13:1)

The gift of tongues sounds like random and silly babbling. Part of what this accomplishes is a breaking down of the stronghold of pride in a person by making them look foolish to the world. Pride is a major disqualifier to fruitful and effective priestly ministry.

Again, a person who does not speak in tongues *still has the Holy Spirit*—because they still have salvation. This is about receiving more of what we've already been given in Christ for the purpose of more effective and fruitful ministry.

8 but you will receive (*lambanō*) power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; (Acts 1:8)

In the same way that we have been given the free gift of salvation, we have also been given the free gift of the Holy Spirit's empowerment to help us in our calling. We need to be empowered to be witnesses for Christ.

- The gift of tongues specifically brings spiritual strength to us when we use it in our private prayer life. See *1 Corinthians 14:4* where Paul says one who speaks in tongues edifies himself—or builds up and strengthens himself.

How do we receive this baptism of the Spirit? When a person *receives* or *takes hold* of salvation, they simply believe in what God has given them. This belief is often accompanied by a prayer and it should involve getting baptized... When we receive or take hold of the gift of the Spirit, we simply believe. It's ours. But this usually happens along with a prayer and someone else filled with the Spirit who lays on hands on the person as they take hold of it themselves.

Here is another story from the book of Acts that demonstrates this very clearly:

14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving (*lambanō*) the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17)

A group of people who had believed in Jesus and been baptized in water (in "the name of the Lord Jesus") had not yet been received the power of the Holy Spirit. So, the apostles came and laid hands on them, and they began to take hold of the Spirit.

We have to be careful not to make hard and fast rules around the Holy Spirit—and salvation for that matter. A person may come to Christ and not be baptized. A person may receive the Spirit without hands being laid on them. These are not hard rules; they are just the main ways God releases his gifts into people's lives.

In Acts 10 we see a group of people receiving the Spirit without hands laid on them:

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" (Acts 10:44-47)

In this case, a group of people receive the Spirit before they are baptized in water. Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to the wind. God is not bound to any box. You cannot put wind in a box.

The main point here is that we have all been freely given both salvation and the power of the Spirit. We are called to be baptized (or “immersed”) into both things.

Furthermore, we are called to be continually immersed. Just like Jesus regularly took hold of his Father’s word, we are to continually take hold of salvation and of the Holy Spirit’s power. Ephesians 5:18 says we are to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

So, this is not even just a one-time thing. There is a first experience of faith and baptism in water and there is a first experience of baptism in the Spirit—which usually involves the laying on of hands and speaking in tongues—but we are to continually experience the Spirit and salvation.

It's important to note that the **“laying on of hands”** can also have to do with imparting other gifts of the Spirit to people. Paul reminded Timothy of this in his first letter to him:

14 Don't minimize the powerful gift that operates in your life, for it was imparted to you by the laying on of hands of the elders and was activated through the prophecy they spoke over you. (1 Timothy 4:14 TPT)

At a certain point, Timothy had a group of leaders lay hands on him and a spiritual gift was awakened within him. There were also prophetic words spoken over him which most likely brought vision and direction to his life’s calling.

This shows another important aspect of why laying hands on people is foundational for us to arise into our callings to impact the world. The laying on of hands can awaken gifts and release prophetic encouragement and direction for our lives.

We also see the laying on of hands in the book of Acts when a person or group of people are called into a specific ministry. We see this with the first “deacons” of the church and the first missionaries:

6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:6)

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them (first missionaries), they sent them away. (Acts 13:3)

All of this shows the laying on of hands has to do with empowering people and releasing them into their specific priestly calling—into the “good works prepared for them before the foundation of the world.”

To summarize: The first part of the foundation is about taking hold of God's grace and love—resting in our complete salvation in Christ. The second part—*"baptisms and laying on of hands"*—means we're to also receive power and direction for bringing this message of grace to those around us.

The foundation is coming to Christ, being baptized in water, established in the truth that our old identity died—our sins are gone—and now we are raised to new life.

With this, we are then called to have hands laid on us and be baptized into an empowerment of the Spirit, which usually manifests in the gift of tongues, which is a sign that we are ministers of reconciliation.

Then, at some point, we should have others pray over us and help release prophetic direction over our lives. These are the foundational things we need in order to rise into our purpose.

Next, we will learn about the final part of the foundation which is called *"the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment."* This part reminds us of a future hope that gives us clarity of vision and purpose in our lives. It also makes us realize that time is short and what we do matters. It will also bring us to the foundational reality that there are eternal rewards for the good (priestly) works we do in the name of Jesus...

Follow-up Encounter:

*Prepare to **take hold** of your salvation through communion. Thank God for the gift of grace and forgiveness and for his perfect love and delight over you.*

As you take communion, remember that the Father has promised to give you more of an encounter with his Holy Spirit.

Have you experienced what Scripture describes as a baptism of the Spirit—where the Spirit overtakes you and manifests in you speaking a strange language?

If not, consider receiving prayer for this during or after communion... Believe in your heart that the Spirit is already yours. You are to receive—or take hold—of what belongs to you! Open your heart and receive—and do not let fear stop you from opening your mouth in praise and unknown "babbling" before God.

If you've already experienced this, ask for a fresh baptism of the Spirit! Thank God for the fullness of his Spirit that already dwells within you and trust him to bring more awareness and empowerment into your heart.