

**August 22, 2021**  
***Last Days Christians – Hebrews 10:23-25***  
**JD Farag**

Good morning and welcome to our Second Service. On Sunday mornings, we have two services, the first is our weekly Bible Prophecy Update. And now Second Service is the sermon where we go through the Bible verse-by-verse.

And we're currently in this amazing Book of Hebrews. And today's text will be Chapter 10. We'll begin in verse 23 and make it all the way through to verse 25. So only three verses today. I'll ask those of you that are here if you're able, if not, where you're seated is fine, but you can stand and follow along with me as I read.

The writer of Hebrews by the Holy Spirit is writing to these Hebrew Christians and says, verse 23, "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And [verse 24] let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds not giving up" [verse 25]. This is a very familiar and often talked about verse, especially now.

"Not giving up, meeting together, [or as some of your translations render it, "assembling together with one another"] as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and [here's why] all the more as you see the day approaching."

Oh, can't wait! Why don't we pray and we'll ask God to bless our time together today in His Word. If you would, please join with me.

Loving your Heavenly Father, we're just so in awe of You. We're in awe of Your majesty, Your glory. Lord, we're thankful to You for Your Word in this portion that we have before us today here in Your Word, especially these verses that are here.

Lord, we want to ask You to at this time, as only You can, just get our attention and don't let our minds wander. We want to give You our undivided attention. And then hold our attention. That's not up to me. The Holy Spirit does that.

So once You've got our attention, Lord, then keep our attention so we can focus and concentrate and hear as You speak into our lives in and through Your Word, we pray in Jesus' name amen and amen. You can be seated, thank you.

Really looking forward to these verses today. I want to talk with you about the characteristics that we as Christians must possess if we're to have any hope of surviving, let alone thriving in these perilous last days as we see the day fast approaching, and it is fast approaching.

So the writer of Hebrews is sort of turning a corner after he started in Chapter 7 all the way through to Chapter 10, about verse 18 he's turning a corner. And now, after meticulously, and I mean meticulously explaining how Jesus Christ fulfills the Old Covenant, the priesthood as our high priest, the fulfillment of the tabernacle, the fulfillment of the Old Covenant.

After explaining that, I mean in detail, he now seeks to encourage them. And make no mistake about it, these Hebrew Christians needed encouragement. They were very discouraged. They were under tremendous pressure at this time. Their brethren, their Jewish brethren who had not come to a saving knowledge of Christ, were pressuring them every day to go back to Judaism, to leave Christ, to go back to the temple, back to the services, the offerings there in the temple because see, this is prior to 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed.

So every day, day in and day out, they're living with this pressure, this stress, and these are family members and friends, and probably even employers, presupposing they still had a job. Because see

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at that time when you came to Christ, you really had to count the cost. You were not family anymore; you were disowned. If you came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, you were fired from your job. You were seen as an outcast.

And so when we read in the epistles and really in the gospels about picking up the cross and counting the cost and following Christ, this took on a whole new meaning for them then. We talked a little bit about this in the Prophecy Update today talking about what's happening in Afghanistan today. Please pray for the people in and of Afghanistan. I tell you; it is worse than what we're being told.

And I was thinking about what's happening not just in Afghanistan, that's at the forefront right now, but even in my birthplace of Beirut, Lebanon. Do you realize that Lebanon is all but collapsed economically and governmentally? Haiti: They just had another major earthquake and then storms that ensued. Really the entire world right now is just - these are perilous times.

We are certainly not just in the last days, but really in the last moments of world history as we know it. We are living in those times, those days.

So the writer of Hebrews is wanting to encourage them. And what better way to encourage them than to exhort them in light of the soon return of Jesus Christ? That is - let me say it like this. If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most encouraging truths in all of scripture, especially for the times we are living in today, this would be it, knowing that trumpet could sound at any time.

There's nothing that has to happen before the rapture happens. It can happen at any time. Jesus said in an hour you expect not. Expect it. It could happen right now, poof! Oh, Lord, that would be great! It's imminent! And it's knowing that the rapture is what we have to look forward to that makes what you're going through easier to get through.

And I know many of you are going through some tremendous difficulties with everything that's happening, especially here on the islands. And I want to encourage you and say to you that God knows and God cares. And again, in the update today, 1 Peter 5:7, you might want to write this down, especially if you're like me, prone to anxiety.

1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on Him."

Why?

I'm glad you asked. Peter answers, "Because He cares for you."

Oh, I mean, right there. Do you ever think of it like that? That God cares about you? He cares about what you're going through. This notion of well, little old me; I mean, God's got a whole universe to run. He's not concerned about me. Oh, yes, He is. He is absolutely concerned about you. He absolutely cares about you. He cares about everything you're going through.

And He knows exactly what you need, even more so than you know what you need. Because He knows the heart, He sees the heart and He knows the need of the heart, the cry of the heart.

Well, today's message is a message of hope and encouragement in these last days as Christians. This is - let me couch it in terms of this is not a thing of, 'we need to do this!' Please, that's not it. It's not, you know, God said you need to do this or don't do that.

No, it's more like this. It's like, hey, I know it's getting tough out there, and this is the survival manual. These are some tips, some ways that you can survive, even thrive in these perilous times.

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This is what that will look like. The Christians that are going to bode well in these perilous last days are the Christians that are going to take heed to God's Word because God is our loving heavenly Father and He knows what's best for us.

And I know maybe you don't think of it like this, but it breaks the heart of God when one of His children is struggling. He hurts, He cares. He loves us so much, and He cares about us so much. And think about it like an earthly parent, even a grandparent.

And you have a child that is struggling. Aren't you going to tax the moon and the stars in as much as you're able to do whatever you can for them? And you're fallen! How much more our heavenly Father?

So that's what we have before us today. I want to share with you what I'm going to call three essentials. You like that word "essential" because we're essential. I just want you to know that. By the way - that's for another time. Oh, I'm so tempted right now, but I think you just got it, didn't you? Okay, good, all right.

So just know that those lights are on till they cut the electricity off, I guess, and the doors are open unless they board them up. But when God opens a door, no man shuts it. We're essential. Okay, I feel better now. Thank you very much.

So three essentials from these three verses that should characterize our lives as Christians as we see the day fast approaching. The first one is in verse 23, and it's that of holding unswervingly to hope. Here the writer is careful to include the "why" concerning hope. It's not just that we hold on to hope, unwavering, unswerving, but why? Why?

"Because He who promised is faithful," that's why. And He will never fail you. He will never let you down. He is faithful. So you put your hope in Him. You'll never be disappointed. And that's why you can be unshakable, immovable, unswerving in holding onto hope. In other words, the one in whom we unswervingly hope in and profess will never fail us. And that should have this much-needed effect of calming us and settling us.

Let me see if I can illustrate it this way, for lack of a better illustration. I'm going to - I'm sorry, Gale, but I have to use you as an example. It's your birthday so I can embarrass you the rest of the day, actually, if I want.

[Laughter]

She's faithful; she's a faithful servant. I tell Gale, well, we need to do this. I don't have to check to see if it's done because I know she's going to do it. I have no doubt. She is just faithful and so I put and I entrust her with a lot of stuff. Don't ask her - because I mean a lot of stuff. And she does it. Now I'll use an example from the mainland.

My first church and the staff that I hired, there was one in particular, a staff member, that not so sure. You know, I didn't really have that - so I would entrust them and hope that they would be found faithful in that which I had entrusted them to do, put my hope in them to do it, to follow through and do it, only to find out that they didn't do it. And so it kind of shook me because now I cannot entrust that person with that because I don't have that hope in them.

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Are you connecting some dots here? Now let's transpose and superimpose that onto the God in whom we profess, the one in whom we put our hope in, He is perfect. He is faithful. It's not that He won't fail us. It's that He can't.

Let me say that again, the same thing in a different way. He just can't. It's not who God is. It's not how God is. It is impossible for Him to fail us. His love never fails. He's perfect. That's in whom we are placing our hope.

And I got to tell you, in these last days, and I know this is something the Lord's been ministering to me as of late, and it's huge. I cannot put my hope in anything or anyone but the Lord, especially now.

And would you agree with me that God - and He's gentle, He's patient, He's kind, He's not harsh with us, He's patient with us, but He just by the Holy Spirit begins that process of showing us that by putting our hope in that person or that thing or that job, we're going to be let down. But if we put our trust in Him, our hope in Him, we will never be let down.

I think God has been loosening our ever-tightening grip on this world, not our home. The things of this world, those things that we looked to, and hoped in, well, they're - I mean, how's that working out for you right now? It's the Lord and the Lord alone in whom we hope.

Well, it sort of ties in with the second one and this should be the let me say it this way - the result, for lack of a better word. It's in verse 24, and it's that of spurring one another toward love and good deeds. This should be the result, the effect of unswervingly putting our hope in Jesus and Jesus alone.

And the offspring of that, the product of that, if you prefer is that it will have this effect of spurring one another on toward love, love! We need love. There's a lot of hate out there right now, right? Would you agree that the enemy has succeeded in large measure in getting everyone to hate everyone?

Man, turn that TV off. No, I mean, seriously, I mean, I have it on, but I have it on mute and I rarely take it off. What? Just pray for me because I am on the news channels, just, you know, keeping my finger on the pulse of what's going on.

But then there's times when I'm thinking, man, if I take that off mute - oh, by the way, I also disabled the closed captioning because that was even worse, because I'm reading and I'm going ...

[Laughter]

Do you realize that what they're showing you on that television screen and on that computer screen, it's all geared to get you to hate them? You realize that, right? And I mean, it's working, it's working. And this is why it is, and I hope you don't tire of me saying this because I'm going to keep saying it because it's the truth.

It doesn't matter: Democrat, Republican, Right, Left, Black, White. Do not see people like that! Now, it's - well, I better not do that, go there. They're either saved or they're lost. That's the only thing that matters in the end. I don't care what color their skin is. I hope you don't, because - well, your pastor and your assistant pastor - well, I'm just going to leave it at that, but...

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I like how one said it: It's not a skin issue, it's a sin issue.

[ Applause ]

Oh, today at the water baptism, a sister made a T-shirt for me, I'm going to wear it today. It's my color. I'm a summer, so it's blue, the color of the baptismal. And it says eternal lives matter.

[ Applause ]

Okay, where was I in the sermon? There's something here that I need to point out because it's not so easily seen at first read. Notice the writer of Hebrews says, "consider how." You know what that means? That means you got to put some thought into it, not just thought, but thoughtfulness. In other words, think of ways that you can spur one another on to love and good deeds. It's going to take some thought. It's going to take being thoughtful. You need to put some effort into this. Consider, hey, how can I spur them on?

Man, how our flesh chafes against that. I don't want to spur them on toward love. I want to criticize them. I want to judge them. I want to gossip about them, not spur them on toward love. And here's what that looks like, by the way. And I'm not talking about you, by the way, you guys are... I'm talking about other carnal Christians in other churches. But you know how it is; it's kind of like, hey, did you hear about so-and-so? Or how about this one; this one is so subtle. How are they doing?

Oh, by the way, I have a really good answer when somebody comes to you and starts wanting to start something like that. You know, hey did you hear? What? And the Proverb says that gossip is like a tasty morsel. You know, it's kind of like, well, what's the juice, what's the tea, what's the dirt, right? Come on, don't look at me like that. You know what I'm talking about. So here's the answer when someone comes up to you and says, how are they doing? Oh, you're so spiritual and not worthy, right? Here's the answer: I don't know; why don't you go ask them?

[Laughter]

Oh, we're not going to do that. You know, the spirit's willing, the flesh is weak. That's why we're to mortify the deeds of the flesh. I tell you, that flesh rears its ugly head. Let me say it like this before we move on to the last one. You know, the day in which we are living is not forgiving of that anymore. We're living at a time where, hey, this is no time for that. This is the time to be spurring one another on, to be encouraging one another, to move them, consider, creatively come up with and consider and put some thought into it, ways that you can just move them towards love, because they're really hurting, by the way. Oh, they won't tell you. You know why they won't tell you? Because they're afraid that you're going to think wow, where's your faith?

Here's an example. Yeah, here's an example. I'm going to use myself as an example. I'm the poster child for this. So you know, I've been very open with you about my struggle in the area of worry. I'm a really good worrier; you know, I have a Ph.D. in worry. I'm walking in victory, But it's still a struggle, anxiety and worry. I'm walking in victory, though. Well anyway, I've shared that. And I mean, if you could read my inbox. Don't; you don't want to read my inbox. But so many comments about "you're a pastor, you shouldn't worry, worry's a sin." I'm like, whoa, I'm not worthy then. Oh, you without sin, perhaps you should cast the first stone. Maybe that's why pastors in particular are not as transparent as they should be.

Never think that when you look at me - first of all, I know you don't because you can't. You look at me, you go, wow, God's amazing because that's not him, look at him.

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[Laughter]

That's a good thing; that's a compliment, by the way. But never look at me like, wow, man, he's got it all together. I hope I don't talk down to you, do I? Oh, please. If I have, forgive me. I'm just a sinner telling another sinner about the savior. And I'm no high and mighty, you know?

And I don't like the title "pastor" because of what it's become/ You know, in the scriptures a pastor's an under-shepherd, doulos, Paul would say a bond servant, a slave. I'm a slave. And the thing with slaves is you can't quit. Slaves can't quit. I'm a slave; I'm a bond slave of Christ. I'm a servant; I'm an under-shepherd. And I really am uncomfortable, and I tell you; you know when I've spoken at conferences on the mainland and I'm very uncomfortable with that whole thing. And when I'm having a conversation with somebody and they find out I'm a pastor - it's really hard on airplanes. Well, of course, I'm an Arab, that makes it even harder on airplanes. You know, my Bible is... what is that? The Koran? No, it's the Bible.

[Laughter]

So I just use my phone now, of course. But as soon as I - because they'll say, hey, what do you do for a living? And I'm like, I'm a pastor.

[Laughter]

It's not because I'm ashamed. It's because I don't like the connotation because oh, you're the clergy.

[Laughter]

What should I call you, Reverend Farag? No! Reverend? Don't ever call me that. Pastor is shepherd, shepherd the flock of God. But it requires this thoughtfulness.

Let me ask you this question. Have you ever just stopped and considered concerning that brother or sister in Christ, how can I just lift him up? You know, I tell you sometimes just a kind word, just a hug, a pat on the back, man. Hey, I get some and I'm like good for a month. I might even get two months out of it. Just a simple, thoughtful gesture. That's what the writer of Hebrews is saying. And wouldn't you agree that if there was ever a time to spur one another towards love and good deeds, that time is now like never before?

Well, it ties into the last one, and it's in verse 25. And some of your translations render it "gathering." I think that it's better understood as "assembling," and I'll explain why in a moment. But the writer of Hebrews is saying don't stop assembling together as apparently some there at that time were doing and had made a habit of it/ These Hebrew Christians, they stopped going to church and assembling together, not gathering.

Gathering's different than an assembly, and here's why. I'm going to use my watch. I haven't done it for a while, so if you've seen this illustration before, you're just going to have to deal with it, Okay, It's a Timex; it takes a licking and keeps on ticking. Oh, it is actually a Timex \$39.95 Timex, okay. Got a watch right here, right? I'm going to put it right there on the pulpit on top of my Bible. And if I had all of the parts to this watch just kind of gathered together, it's of no use. It's not functioning. Well, they're gathered; they're not assembled. You see where I'm going?

The writer of Hebrews is saying don't forsake assembling together. So all of the parts of the body of believers are assembled, and they're functioning. That's what a healthy body functions like. We're different parts of the same body of Christ. And when we're assembled together, well, here's an

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example; Paul talks about it in his epistles. I really believe Paul had a sense of humor. If you really read the epistles, he had to. I think he had to have a sense of humor. But he's talking about the different parts of the body that kind of fancy themselves as being more important than other parts. You know, like the hand, shouldn't, or the eye shouldn't say, man, I wish I was a hand or, you know, the armpit. Wish I wasn't the armpit in the body of Christ. I wish I was a hand. Every part is extremely important. So I should never do this; I should never have tools in my hands because that's dangerous and I can do a lot of damage. So I got a hammer and I got a nail, and I'm trying to hammer a nail. I can never do that right. I love you that have that skill. I don't. But I'm hammering that nail, and I hit my thumb. Now, what does my body do? Ooh! (Kissing thumb) The whole body comes to the aid of the thumb. It's going to be okay, as I talk to it.

[Laughter]

The other hand, kind of rubs it; it's okay, it's going to be okay. Oh, that hurt! I know; it's going to be okay. Oh, it's cut! Let me get you a Band-Aid. The whole body puts the Band-Aid on the part that's hurting and injured. That's being assembled together. We're all different parts of the body. Great illustration and I'll end with this, and then we'll talk about water baptism, but it was many years ago. Pastor Chuck Smith, before he went home to be with the Lord, was at a conference, and I wasn't at this particular conference, but I heard about it, and it just really made all the sense in the world to me. So there was an accident, an automobile accident. And apparently, somebody had - you know how when those lights go yellow, you speed up? You're supposed to slow down. I do; I'm a law-abiding citizen.

[Laughter]

So apparently the light went yellow and the driver sped up. And then there was a collision and an accident there at the intersection. So Pastor Chuck drew upon this as an illustration. He said, you know when the police showed up, their concern was to see whose fault it was. You know, who broke the law, who ran the red light?

Are his initials JD?

Yeah, no.

Who in the wrong, who's in the wrong? That's the policeman. But then the paramedics show up. They're there to minister to the wounds of the injured. Here was his point. We got way too many policemen in the body of Christ and not enough paramedics. Somebody is bleeding, hurting, struggling, and we're pointing the finger of blame. Well, that's what you get! You made your bed, now lie in it!

Wow, where's the love? That's not love. And that's not Jesus either. Hey, they're a part of the body. That thumb just got bashed in.

And you want to know whose fault it is?

It's the hammer's fault. I knew it! That hammer!

Hey, why don't you minister to the wound? And aren't we all hurting, wounded people? That's what the assembly does.

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And real quick, and I want you to think this through with me, this is very important because the ministry that takes place here in this amazing church that I'm so privileged to pastor is not just from pulpit to pew, as it were. It's between you and you.

You know that, right? So I teach the Word, as is my privilege to do, but, you know, after I'm done, you're out there, and the Lord might use you to minister to somebody else, maybe a word fitly spoken for that person.

And the Holy Spirit put them on your heart, and you're looking at me going, man, they look like they're really struggling. And you walk up to them and you consider a way to encourage them, and say even as something as simple as, hey, I don't know what's going on, but the Lord just put you heavy on my heart. Can I just pray for you? And then just give them a hug and love on them, man. Just love on them.

You know how it is, how we are. We're all so crazy busy. I'm just as guilty as anyone. You know when you see somebody say, hey, how are you doing?

Hey, great. How are you doing?

Oh, blessed.

All right.

Cool.

Bye.

What would happen if this happened? Hey, how are you doing?

Well, do you got a minute?

Oh, no, hey, we'll do lunch sometime. I wasn't expecting that. You mean I'm actually going to have to take some time and listen to them, I mean, really, listen.

You know, not fake listen; you know what fake listen is, right? That's when they're talking and you're inserting the "Oh, is that right" in the right spot until you mess up. They ask you a question; you go, oh, hmm. No, busted; you weren't listening at all.

In fact, usually you're trying to think of what you're going to say while they're talking. And then - I'm talking about myself. You'll even interrupt them. Finish the sentence for them. I mean, just after all, just kind of speed this thing up. I got things to do. I really don't have time. I wasn't expecting you to say that. I was expecting you to give me the pat answer, the canned answer.

Yeah, I'm blessed. How are you doing?

I'm blessed.

Okay.

No, you're not. How about you ask them this?

How are you really doing?

Oh, thank you for asking. I'm not doing real good. I'm really struggling. Here's what's going on.



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Wow, man, that's heavy. Listen, let's pray; I'll pray for you. And if there's anything I can do to help you, I want to help you. I want to be there for you.

You know, sometimes just being there for somebody, just being present, just being there, you don't have to even say anything. Sometimes people don't need your mouth, they just need your shoulder.

I'm going to write a book - if I ever write a book, that's going to be the title of it because I'm the mouth in the body of Christ. And I'll give you my mouth. I'm rushing in trying to fix the thing, right? Sometimes people just need a shoulder to cry on.

And guys, in marriage with your wives, sometimes they're not communicating to you because they want you - because we're fixers, right? We're going to - let's fix this thing, let's get this thing resolved right now. Sometimes they just need you to listen, and not talk.

I'm getting so convicted right now. Just listen to them. Don't try to say, well... no, just shut up, just listen to them. They just need to be able to share their heart with you. Just listen to them, be there for them, just be present. Eyeball to eyeball, just be there for them, listen to them. My wife's in this service, so I got to be on my best behavior.

Hey, let's talk about water baptism. I'm really looking forward to our water baptism today, and I want to take the remainder of our time and just quickly and simply explain what water baptism is, what water baptism is not.

So I've got four things here just real quick, starting with the first one, which is that water baptism is a biblical command that we obey once we become a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ. It's a command, actually.

Matthew, Chapter 28:19-20, Jesus speaking, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Now, for those of you that are going to be baptized today, I'm going to baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And you know what else I'm going to do? this is no extra charge, in Jesus' name. And I'll tell you why.

On the mainland many years ago, we're doing a water baptism at the beach. This is in north Idaho during the summer, of course. And there was this guy there watching the water baptisms. And so after I finished baptizing this one guy, I noticed this guy out of the corner of my eye taking him aside, and he goes, that pastor baptize you in the name of Jesus?

He was like, well, he baptized me in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And he starts pointing to the Book of Acts, and he just, I mean, I tell you - I was just telling Pastor Mac this morning that when I see someone like that do something like that, that's not okay. Watch out; those are wolves, by the way. Those are wolves.

So I made it a decision at that point. From that point on years, all the years later, okay, in Jesus' name, there. You happy now? In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name. Okay.

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Secondly, water baptism is an outward expression of an inward commitment, proclaiming publicly His death, burial, and resurrection. So watch this.

So this is why you are immersed because you're identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So when I take you and put you in the water, by the way, plug your nose; you don't want me doing that. I did that one time and apparently, I didn't do it good enough. She was so mad at me.

I was like, wow, I'm sorry. I'm trying to do my best; anyway, enough of my problems.

So plug your nose or whatever, just you know... So you're going down like into the grave, into the water, identifying with the death of Jesus Christ and the burial. And then when I bring up and I will bring you up,

[Laughter]

you're identifying with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's what the symbolism of baptism is. It's an outward expression of an inward commitment.

Roman 6:1-8, "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" Doesn't mean you're sinless. You're in Christ. "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death."

It's a death to self.

"In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with Him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with Him in his Resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now, if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him."

It's an identification of salvation an outward proclamation of salvation. And that really ties into our third one: What water baptism is not. Water baptism is not necessary for salvation. When you get baptized, it's not to be saved. It's because you are saved. Baptism doesn't save you.

Now hang in there with me because there is a false teaching alive and well today, been around a long time, nothing new under the sun. It's got new wrapping paper on it. I hate it. It's called generational baptism, which means that you have to be baptized to be saved.

And the way they get there, I mean, they twist the scriptures into a pretzel that no one would want to eat to get there. Ephesians 2:8-9. They can't get around this. "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast."

Did you read anywhere in there where I have to be baptized? For it is by grace and baptism you've been saved?

No. It doesn't say that.

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***Last Days Christians – Hebrews 10:23-25***  
**JD Farag**

My favorite and hands down, I've only had one guy that took me to task. He did a pretty good job. I was actually pretty impressed. I even told him that's pretty impressive the way he twisted the scriptures to get there.

But I go right to the criminal on the cross. We affectionately refer to him as the thief on the cross. Well, I mean, this is - well, we used to say slam dunk. Now, I guess the cool thing is drop the mic. I'm not going to drop this mic. But this is a drop the mic; this is a slam dunk. You know the account, right?

These two criminals - that doesn't mean there was only two that were crucified with Christ that day, but you got two guys there that are being crucified at the same time as Christ. Can you imagine the savior of the world, and one of them gets saved? The other one rejects Christ. Man!

So when he acknowledges that he's guilty and that Jesus is innocent, he tells the other guy, he says, hey, we deserve to be here. This man has done nothing. He is innocent. Truly, he is the son of God. And he says to Jesus, will You remember me when You enter Your kingdom?

And Jesus, I mean, oh, this was His answer to him. "Truly, truly [I tell you the truth] today you will be with Me in paradise"

[if you can figure out a way to get off the cross, go get water baptized, get back up here, then I can take you].

I'm sorry I had to do that, but you get the point. He didn't get baptized, but he got saved. How about that? I'm not even going to bother with how they try to twist that one.

Water baptism is not necessary for salvation. It's a public proclamation of one's salvation. So there's going to be people there today. We've got plenty of chairs set up. If you want to join with us, we'd love to have you. If you're not being water baptized, it is such a rich time.

One of my favorite things to do as a pastor is water baptisms. And I just love it so much because what you're doing is you're publicly identifying with Jesus Christ and His death and burial and resurrection.

And everybody that's going to be there today is going to be a witness to your proclamation of your salvation publicly. You know, we used to do it on Kailua Beach, back in the day, as they say. But now we got our own place, so nah, nah, na-na-nah, anyway.

Last one: Water baptism is not able to cleanse you or remove sinful habits from you. That comes by confessing and forsaking sin, 1 John 1:9. We've talked about this. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

And then Proverbs 28:13; this is a very interesting proverb. And I want to end with this one. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes will have mercy."

You catch that? What does it mean to confess your sins? It means that you confess and acknowledge that it is sin. What do you mean?

Well, see, this is our problem. We don't call it sin anymore. We call it something else. We call them issues. I've got some issues.

Oh, you have issues, do you?

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You have sin! Oh, Jesus died for your issues? No, He died for your sins.

You know, I talked about this last week. I won't belabor it, but just real quick. The poster child for this is the word "adultery." (Gasp)

No, we're not going to call it that. It's an affair.

Oh, it was just an affair. Oh, okay, it's just an affair. No, it was adultery, the sin of adultery.

That's what confessing your sin is. You confess it as sin. Lord, I confess that was sin. I sinned against You. We're not confessing issues. We're going to have some issues I need to confess.

No, confess your sins because see, if you don't call sin "sin," then it's hands off. He is going to forgive sins. But if you change the label on it, and you don't call it sin and you call it something else, well, wait a minute. He forgives sins, He cleanses us from sin.

So you better get it in to the "sin" column so He can. If you've got in in the "issues" column, then you do have issues, believe me. It has to be confessed as sin. I confess that this is sin; I have sinned against you, God.

Okay, real quick, lastly, so what we're going to do oh, this is actually - did I already say one last thing? This will be the last of a couple of the last things.

Okay, wedding ring, right? This wedding ring that I wear is a symbol that I'm married. The wedding ring doesn't marry me. It's just the symbol that I'm married, okay? And it's been on there for 33 years. Can't even take it off anymore, but that's another story for another time.

Water baptism is a symbol that you've been saved. Do you see that connection? It's symbolic that you're saved just like a wedding ring is a symbol that you're married. Okay, what we're going to do is - let's have the worship team come up. I'll go ahead and have you stand up.

Let's make our way out there. That should give you plenty of time to get changed. Let's get out there; I'd like to get started as close to 1:00 as possible, and then plan - it shouldn't take too long. I'll have you home by 11 p.m. tonight. But let's try to be out there by 1:00.

And again, for those of you that are not being baptized, we'd encourage you to join with us. It is such a blessing to have you there and to witness this public profession of salvation as people get baptized. Also - well, anyway, we'll talk about it more when we get there. Okay, you brought towels, right? Can I borrow one?

Let's pray; Father in heaven, thank You so much, Lord. Oh, God, You're so good. You're just awesome. You're so awesome. We're so in awe of You, Lord. Lord, thank You so much.

Thank You for giving us this to do, even commanding us to do this because of what it represents. And Lord, as far as the days in which we're living, I just pray that the Holy Spirit will take what we've seen here in Hebrews and begin that process of building it into our lives and blessing it to our hearts.

We want that to be us. We want that to be said of us. We want to be that person that when someone sees us coming, they don't go the other way; they come to us, not away from us. Lord, we want to be encouragers. We want to be loving to the body, especially as we see the day fast approaching, in Jesus' name. Amen.