

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; 36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We've been studying a single idea, trying to get a grasp on faith. What is faith. Where does it come from. How does it work. How do we grasp it and live by it so that we can be pleasing to God.

I am startled at how often I find myself returning to the economy of words that is what we have titled; **The Lord's Prayer**

How can so few words transcend all of life and set our minds to understand everything from the fall of man, the usurping of the authority to reign on this earth by Satan and evil, and the ultimate victory of God and of His righteousness and goodness over all things.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Stop right there, because withing those all encompassing ideas, lives the idea of faith. Let me try to explain; I barely understand myself, so if I can explain and help you to understand, that will be an undertaking that God will need to help in.

Faith is always inextricably connected to God's revealed will. Let me say that again; Faith is always inextricably connected to God's revealed will.

Jesus said, here's what to pray for. Thy kingdom come. The authority of God to reign on this earth as opposed to Satan who reigns now: come.

That's what we're praying for. We're praying for that ultimate day when Jesus will come charging out of heaven and put an end to all evil, and remove and bind up Satan from authority on this earth.

That's cataclysmic, and if you read the book of revelation you get a

taste of the sweeping catastrophic nature of the events that precede that glorious return.

We're praying for nothing less than the reversal of the fall into sin in the garden. These are sweeping conclusions that God is orchestrating over all of the long centuries of man after the fall.

Adam obeys Satan, disobeys God, and tumbles mankind into sin and evil. Every man is born sinful. We are all born of Adam's seed. Sin indwells us from birth. We inherit it from our parents, all the way back to Adam.

Immediately, God begins His work of reconciliation. God's will as revealed in the Lord's prayer; Jesus said, Pray for this; is that the authority of God to reign in this fallen world would come, and that it would be equivalent to everywhere else in all of God's creation.

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done on earth, like it is in heaven.

You say, how does faith play into this Jim. I'm getting there. Be patient.

God is incrementally, over the long centuries, according to His infinite plan, reconciling this world to himself by accomplishing His will, His plan, through the agency of people who He calls out of this fallen world to transfer their ownership, by faith, from Satan to Him.

Some day in eternity, if eternity has days, we will be able to see the entire sweeping plan of God and how it unfolded, one person at a time, first through the patriarchs who belonged to Him, and then in a chosen nation that belonged to Him, and then in His Son who He sent into the world to accomplish redemption from sin, and then

through the centuries of the church, redeemed from all nations, like the sand of the seashore, and then the ultimate conclusion after the church is removed and the seven years of Jewish history are completed, Christ himself returns to this world and deposes Satan and crushes all evil and sets up His authority to reign, on earth, at Jerusalem, on David's throne.

What is faith? Faith is that process by which God redeems people, He makes them His own, and then He uses them, He works through them to accomplish His will.

God accomplishes His good pleasure in the ultimate redemption of this fallen world by using painfully ordinary people, people like you and me, to incrementally move towards His ultimate final plan.

We all, every one of us, has a bit part to play. God will accomplish His plan incrementally by using us in the ultimate process.

When we do that, when God accomplishes His will through us we become participants in the unwritten volume of this hall of faith.

By faith so and so did such and such, over and over, painfully ordinary folks, accomplished miraculous things, because God was accomplishing His plan by using them as partners with Him. Like people carrying a baton in a massive relay race that has lasted for 60 centuries.

By faith, Jim believed God could even use him and studied the word of God and did his best to teach it. Poorly. But God combined with the effort and miracles occurred. People actually responded.

By faith, Gary returned to the Philippines and raised pigs for the glory of God.

By faith, Jeff worked tirelessly behind the scenes, painting and fixing so we could meet in this tired old house.

By faith, Margie worked hard to facilitate our feasts each month so that we could enjoy the common fellowship of saints who also belong to Jesus and have been called out of this world.

By faith, Carl and Karen have prayed for our welfare and that somehow in spite of ourselves, God would be glorified in this place and pleased with our worship.

All of those things, just like all of the things mentioned in this 11th chapter of Hebrews are incremental steps toward the final outcome when Jesus returns and takes back this world.

FAith is inextricably tied to God's will. He has revealed His will in the Lord's prayer. And we believe and say, I'd like to help, what can I do to advance your cause to regain this world for your glory.

And He says, you can teach. You can pray. You can wash. You can fix things. You can set aside money so others can work for these ends. You can take care of children. You can read and understand and obey my Words, so the onlooking world will know you belong to Me.

Finally, in this long introduction, we have looked at faith working towards God's will, God's ultimate goal, but there is one other thing that is intrinsic to understanding biblical faith.

Revealed truth. The word of God. This book.

Faith is always inextricably tied to the words of this book.
Revelation of God. Revealed truth.

Paul says to the Romans; 10:17 *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Faith accomplishes incremental movement towards God's ultimate plan, and in so doing, brings Him glory. But how does that work, if we don't know what the will of God, the pleasure of God, the desire of God is.

Faith can't act in a vacuum. Faith must be tied inextricably to God's revealed will. This book.

People are crying for more faith, more faith, like it lives in a vacuum somewhere. Pour it in, whatever it is, so I can have it's benefits.

It doesn't work that way. Paul says; Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the words of Christ. This book. The Word of God. We have to have this component living in us.

Faith that accomplishes God's good pleasure must first know something about God, and His will, and His purposes. God has revealed Himself in this book.

There fore faith is inextricably tied to the revealed truths in this book.

We don't believe in some indefinable, un-knowable force like Luke Skywalker. We believe in a God who has accomplished all of the things in this book, before we got here, and who promises to likewise accomplish miracles in us and through us . . . by faith.

Listen again to Paul in this same chapter 10 of Romans; 1 - 3a
1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites

*is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they are zealous for God, **but not on the basis of knowledge**. 3 Because they were ignorant of God's righteousness and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness....*

Human zeal, coupled with ignorance, accomplishes false religion.

Faith that pleases God and accomplishes miracles for His glory, **MUST** be coupled with the words of this book. There's nothing more important to successful living and being pleasing to God, than knowing intimately, what this book says. And 45 minutes a week doesn't get that done.

Faith. God is accomplishing His will in this world. He is using His people to accomplish His will. He gives them the faith, and graciously allows them to be fellow participants with Him, in His plan for the ages. Faith begins in words. God says something. We believe it. We act in accord with revealed truth. God accomplishes miracles through us.

That's the formula for chapter 11 of Hebrews, and we're coming to the end. But with all of that in mind, let's pick up the narrative again in vs. 30

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

Let's incorporate our formula. God uses people to accomplish His good will by coupling faith to revealed truth which works to accomplish miracles. Things only God could do. But He graciously incorporates believers into it.

God could have taken care of the wicked people in Jericho without any help from Israel's children.

He could have sent the angel of death and killed them all. Then He could have sent birds to eat their flesh and those birds could deposit the processed flesh of those wicked people all over the desert. Then God could have sent an earthquake to take care of the wall. And then He could have told Joshua, OK, it's all ready for you. Walk in and possess it.

He could just accomplish the whole thing without them and then turn over the keys. He could do that in a thousand different ways if He desired to.

Recall if you will, your Sunday school lessons about this. God brought the children to the Jordan river and told them, go on in and conquer.

So they sent 12 spies to spy out the land. And the spies came back and 2 of them said, it's milk and honey. Let's do this! It's just like God said. All we have to do is march in and God will be with us as we take what He promised to us.

But 10 of the spies said; There's giants in there. Compared to them, we're like a grasshopper that jumps underneath your foot that was coming down. Squish. If we go in there, we'll be squished. Those giants will crush us like grasshoppers.

And the children of Israel believed the faithless men, and wept. They refused to believe, after all the previous miracles God had wrought through His servant Moses, that God was bigger than the giants.

The children were faith less. God can't do it. We'll be crushed. We'll be squished by those giants.

And that result so dis-pleased God that He let them wander in circles in the desert for 40 years until that entire wimpy faithless, spineless generation died off, and it was the next generation that believed God and marched in beyond the Jordan.

First stop, Jericho.

Faith has to be tied to the word of God, and God has revealed to Joshua, His prophet and the leader of Israel, what His plan is. This is the word of God that the peoples faith will act on. Ready?

Joshua 6: 1 Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. 2 The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. 3 "You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. 4 "Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 "It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

Here's how this is going to work Joshua. The ark, and the seven priests with rams horns, and the army behind them, and all the able bodied folk behind them and they'll march around the city one time and go back to camp. Do that just like that for 6 days. Then on the 7th day, do it seven times and when Joshua says to shout, you shout! And the walls are going to fall down flat, and every man will run in straight ahead and you're going to destroy everything but keep the gold and the silver and spare Rahab and her household.

Some time, if you get to sit down with someone who has gone to the war college and studied methods of warfare, ask him to comment on the viability of this plan.

To the world, the plan is ridiculous. Does that strike a common note. Didn't Paul tell us something like that. It pleases God to come up with plans that sound ridiculous to the world, so that when He accomplishes the dopey sounding plan, guess who gets the glory.

1 Cor. 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written,

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”*

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For consider your calling, brothers:

God delights in coming up with plans that the world thinks are ridiculous. March around Jericho and toot your horns. Whoopee. That'll never work. That's the dumbest plan anyone ever heard. Total foolishness; to the world.

But God had trained Israel's children in the wilderness for 40 years to do exactly what He says, no matter how dopey it sounds to the rest of the world.

They received their marching orders and they marched. And I'm sure there was a huge relief inside Jericho when they looked over the wall and said, there's just a bunch of stooges with toot horns and a box marching around the wall. We're good to go. Let 'em march all they want with their box and their toot horns.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. The word of God, combined with the obedience of faith of the Israelites, caused the will of God to be accomplished. The wall fell down.

Our formula at work. The word of God, combined with obedience of faith, caused a miraculous result. It really is that simple.

31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

This is such a marvelous story of belief in God, and God's grace, I just have to read it to you.

As I read, keep in your mind our formula. What was the truth revealed to Rahab. What did she know about God's word. What did believing in the God of Israel cause her to do to advance the kingdom of God?

Faith is obedient actions based in revealed truth about God that advances His causes in this world.

Joshua 2:1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. 2 And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 3 Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." 6 But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. 7 So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

8 Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof 9 and said to the men, (Here is what has been revealed to Rahab, the revelation of God she will act on.) "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. 11 And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. 12 Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with

my father's house, and give me a sure sign 13 that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.” 14 And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”

15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. 16 And she said to them, “Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way.” 17 The men said to her, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. 18 Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. 19 Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. 20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear.” 21 And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

22 They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. 23 Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. 24 And they said to Joshua, “Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us.”

Rahab's house was built into the wall, so that the window looked on the outside of the wall.

The wall fell down flat. With one exception. In the pandemonium of the collapsed wall and the shouts of the advancing armies of Israel into the city, notice one little area of the wall that didn't fall flat.

A house, with a window, with a scarlet cord hanging out of the window. All else is fallen flat, save this one house. And the people inside that house have joined joyfully with the armies of God. They belong to Him

If you read the geneology of Jesus in Matthew's gospel in chapter 1 you'll read these words in vs. 5; *And Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse*

And Jesse was the father of King David of whose lineage came the Christ.

It pleased God to include a harlot, saved by her faith, and a Midianite in the direct line to Jesus the Messiah, by whom God opened up the channels of salvation to anyone who will believe in God's foolish plan.

22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who (the) are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

God delights in accomplishing His perfect will with the most imperfect of people. We all stumble in many ways, says James. Not many mighty, not many noble, says Paul.

God takes foolish weak people, reveals His truth to them, sets them in imperfect motion, and accomplishes glories that glorify Him through their partnership with Him.

And that isn't just true for these Hero's in the Hall of Faith. Those terms make it sound like this is only for a few chosen rock stars. No.

God can use you, and He can use me, He can use the most foolish and ordinary and dullest and least likely people to orchestrate miracles that advance His cause in this world and give glory to Him.

We study His word. We acknowledge His ownership. We ask Him to use us for His glorious purposes. And we begin by day by day obedience to this book.

With men it is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

What will our chapter in this book of faith say. Both collectively and individually.

It pleases God to use groups, like this church, collectively, to accomplish miracles. Just like the children of Israel marching.

And it pleases Him to use individuals, each one of us, like Rahab,

one individual who believed and sought God's will, not only for her, but by faith, her entire household was also spared, because of her belief and obedience.