

Sermon Transcript

06.14.2026

Hebrews 11:4-7

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- Good morning. Please open to Hebrews 11. We'll be in vss. 4-7.
- You might have heard Hebrews 11 called the hall of faith chapter because the word faith occurs 25 times in a litany of OT saints who were commended for their faith. And so in honor of the hall of faith, I want to tell you about the hall of fame, in particular, the baseball hall of fame.
- Anyone know where its located? Cooperstown, NY.
- And when I was 8 years old, my grandparents took my brother and me there.
- But first we flew into NYC to see the Yankees in the original Yankee Stadium, the house that Ruth built. I grew up in the Houston area, but my grandmother was a big Yankees fan & I really loved Don Mattingly so I was so psyched to get to see Donnie Baseball play in this legendary locale.
- And I did. For one full inning. Then the heavens opened up, it rained for a couple of hours, and the game got called. That was strike one on this trip.
- After that we drove upstate to see the hall of fame. My favorite part was the memorabilia. Things like Babe Ruth's locker, Hank Aaron's 715th home run ball, George Brett's infamous pine tar bat, and the holy grail of baseball cards, a 1909 Honus Wagner card. Of less interest to me as a kid was the real point of the hall of fame, each player's bust with a bit of information on how he was significant to the game. That's like Hebrews 11 and this list of persons who are spiritually significant to the kingdom.
- After Cooperstown, we drove back to NYC, but I got sick on the way. So I'm throwing up in the backseat as we get into the city. My experience of seeing the Empire State Building involved barely looking up from my grandmother's lap as we drove by.
- Then my grandparents wanted to stop by Saks Fifth Avenue and buy something for each of us boys. Now, I'm from Baytown, TX, which recently was named the most dirty city in America on some list, so at this point in my life I had never been anywhere as nice as Saks Fifth Avenue, but I naturally assumed the way to really class up the joint was by vomiting in the dressing room while trying on some khakis so we made a rather quick and inconspicuous exit.
- At that point, we were supposed to stay another day to explore, but my digestive system wanted an earlier departure so we decided to cut the trip short & head back early. Strike 2.
- And as we are returning the rental car, we stopped for fuel and a guy came out of the gas station and told us that he'll fill it up for us which wasn't too strange back then. You also had to pre-pay, which was pretty normal. But it seemed a bit abnormal when the guy took my grandfather's money and just took off running.
- So my grandfather goes into the store, and an employee said, oh that's Earl or whatever, he does that all the time. He's got a uniform, but he doesn't work here. If you want to catch him, he normally just runs down that alley over there and hides for an hour. Now, as appealing as it sounded to chase an obvious criminal down a random NYC alley, my grandfather decided to just eat the loss and that was strike three.
- Since then, I've had a few Griswold family vacations full of mishaps, but that was the genesis, the firstfruits. And yet that was one of my favorite trips of my childhood. Despite all of the afflictions, it was a blast.

- And I think of that as we get into the context of Hebrews 11 not only for the hall of faith tie in, but also because of the suffering. As we'll see in the chapter, these hall of faithers don't have it easy. The life of faith isn't a path paved with prosperity and ease. There is pain and suffering and tears and adversity.
- So that's exactly what these Hebrew Christians need to hear as they're facing persecution. Every bust in the hall of faith had seen hardship. And that's also what we need to hear as we face our own afflictions and tribulations.
- So let's pray and then we'll dive in. Self, others, me.
- Well, as we begin, I want to talk about bibliology, the doctrine of Scripture. If we're working thru the Bible, then we need to know a little something about what this text is.
- First, we can say that the Bible is informative. That is, hopefully there are things you learn about the text this morning. If you don't better understand the text, then I've failed in that regard.
- But the bible isn't merely informative, its also transformative. The goal isn't just information download, but life change. Scripture wasn't merely written to be understood, but obeyed.
- And so the book of Hebrews has given us a number of indicatives. Christ is a better high priest who has offered a better sacrifice on the basis of better promises of a better covenant promising better rewards. Those are all indicatives, statements of fact.
- But those indicatives exist in order to fuel the imperatives, that is, the commands of Scripture.
- In Hebrews, the overarching imperative is to hold fast and draw near.
- This would be of particular importance in a context where these Hebrew Christians are being persecuted, plundered and imprisoned.
- In the face of such tribulation, there is a threat, a temptation, to recant. Think of the imagery of being tortured and your torturer says, if only you'll confess, the pain will all stop.
- And so, if they relent, if they recant, if they apostatize from the Church, they would naturally drift back to their ethnic roots, back to Judaism, back to the seeming safety of the synagogue.
- So the author writes the book to dissuade them from drifting; & to do that, he attempts to show that Christ is better. He offers a better covenant than Moses. He's a better high priest than Aaron. He's a better sacrifice than bulls & goats. He offers a better sanctuary than the tabernacle.
- To make that point, the author utilizes something called typology which refers to a way of understanding God-ordained parallels between the covenants marked by correspondence & escalation. Christ is like Moses and Aaron and the sacrificial lamb and the tabernacle in some sense. There is correspondence or similarity, a genuine analogy.
- But He is also better, that's escalation. So we've seen Christ's supremacy, His superiority, His betterness like bread crumbs leading us through the book.
- Along the way, we've promises & warnings to keep the audience tethered to Christ. We've noted that it isn't coincidental that the same book contains both the strongest warnings about falling away AND the strongest exhortations to confidence and assurance because we need both.
- We can't say that because we have the indicatives or because we have the promises, therefore we don't need the warnings or the imperatives, but neither can we say that since we have imperatives and warnings that we should discount or negate the indicatives and promises.
- And so we saw that culminate in chap 10 as the author warned of the dangers of drifting while at the same time expressing confidence that the church would not and could not ultimately drift.
- The reason is because, as we read two weeks ago in vs. 38, the righteous shall live by faith.
- But what is faith? What does it look like? How does it work? That's what chapter 11 is about.

- Last week we saw a semi-definition of faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- This week we'll begin a series of verses demonstrating not only that the righteous live by faith, but that faith is the very means by which the righteous are declared righteous.
- In the HoF, you see a range of stories & skills. Guys who crushed 50 homers/year & guys who never got a major league hit. Pitchers, fielders, batters, & coaches. Guys from USA, Canada, Cuba & Japan. Black, white, Hispanic, & Asian. But the 1 thing they have in common is baseball.
- Likewise, from Abel to Abraham to Moses to David, there's a whole lot of diversity in the catalog of saints that are listed & yet, they all have one thing in common. That one thing is the same thing that the 1st century audience of Hebrews and we share today and that is faith. So let's see how vs. 4-7 further develop what this faith entails by looking at these first three ante-diluvian, which means pre-flood, saints. Starting in vs. 4 which reads:

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4)

- The author begins with Abel. You recall the story, no doubt. After Adam and Eve are banished from the garden they have a number of kids. The Bible explicitly says that they have other sons and daughters.
 - *The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. (Genesis 5:4)*
 - I mention that because your atheist buddy who never actually read the Bible thinks he's really clever by asking who Cain & Abel married as if that's a real stumper. Obviously, they married their siblings. That's weird to us today, but the reason it's weird is because eventually God's law forbid it and that prohibition has been hardwired into our Western morality's sense of taboo, we live downstream of millennia of that proscription, but originally it wasn't weird at all. I'm not advocating for incest, but I am saying that we need to read the Bible on its own terms. Until God's law prohibited incest, it wasn't forbidden, it was actually normalized.
- Now, we don't know the exact order of all of the kids, but it seems that the first two kids were Cain, followed by Abel. And the main point of the story from the perspective of Genesis is Cain's fratricide, his murder of his brother.
- And that then becomes a type that will extend throughout the OT. Consider how often a child is persecuted by his sibling in the redemptive lineage. Esau wanted to kill Jacob. Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him. David's brothers looked down upon him. Ishmael seems to have mocked Isaac.
- There is a consistent theme of familial discord and in particular the rejection of one son by his siblings.
- And consider how that fits into the typology of Christ. Christ who fully shares in our humanity and thus is not ashamed to call us brothers as we read about in chapter 2, was betrayed by humanity and rejected by His own disciples.
- So that's the emphasis in Genesis, the murder of Abel, but in Hebrews the author is more interested in Abel's faith. Now, in the Genesis account, Abel's faith isn't highlighted.
- Here's what we read:
 - *In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had*

regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. (Genesis 4:3–5)

- Both sons bring offerings. Both of those offerings correspond to their tasks. So this has led to a lot of speculation about why “the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering.”
- According to the first century Jewish writer, Philo, Cain’s sacrifice wasn’t presented immediately and he didn’t offer the first fruits, but some leftovers, almost like the sacrifice is an afterthought.
- Josephus said that Abel’s sacrifice was better because a sheep grows naturally whereas plants are harvested only by forcing the ground so you can see some sort of gospel vs. law thing in his theory.
- Others have said that this was a type pointing to the fact that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins as we read in chapter 9.
- But none of that is the author’s focus. From a purely biblical standpoint, we can point to two realities that explain why Abel was chosen rather than Cain.
- First there is the divine perspective of God’s sovereign purpose of election. The same reason that Abraham was chosen out of paganism or Isaac was chosen over Ishmael or Jacob over Esau, as Paul writes in Romans 9:11
 - *...though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls... (Romans 9:11)*
- From the divine perspective Abel was chosen because of God’s sovereign will.
- But the author of Hebrews isn’t writing about predestination and election here. Rather, the focus in this context is on the human side of the equation and from that perspective, Abel was chosen because of faith. As Luther writes:
 - “Here the apostle determines clearly that the importance of the sacrifices and the entire value of the merit did not lie in the worthiness or the greatness of the work, but that faith is the cause; for God weighs the spirits and looks at the heart.” (Martin Luther)
- Or as Calvin says:
 - “Abel’s sacrifice was for no reason preferable to that of his brother, except that it was sanctified by faith...” (Calvin)
- There are lots of well-intentioned, but misled theories about why God accepted Abel rather than Cain, but many of them swerve dangerously toward justification by works or self-righteousness or moralism or legalism.
- As we’ll see throughout Hebrews, the phrase “by faith” is repeated over and over and over again in order to awaken us to the primacy of faith because our hearts are wired by sin to drift toward effort. We don’t want to rest in grace, we want to earn, to merit, to deserve.
- Having to rely on faith, having to rest in grace, having to be desperate and dependent is antithetical to our inherent narcissism. We want some credit. We want some glory.
- This reminds me of the breakup of the Jerry Jones/Jimmy Johnson dynasty which was at least in part due to Jerry’s desire for more of the credit. The trophy wasn’t enough. He wanted credit. That’s like our innate response to justification by faith. It grates against our sense of self-worth.
- But Abel was commended for faith which in Pauline terms would overlap with the idea of justification by faith. And that faith still speaks.
- What does that mean?
- Well, in Genesis 4 we read this:
 - *And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. (Genesis 4:10)*

- And in Hebrews 12 we'll read about
 - ...*the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.* (Hebrews 12:24)
- But here in chapter 11, I think the idea is as John Chrysostom says:
 - "For he who encourages others to be righteous, speaks" (Chrysostom)
- In other words, Abel speaks by virtue of his name and faith being spoken about today. He speaks as an example of justification by faith. Abel didn't conquer a kingdom. He didn't lead an army. He didn't write a book of the Bible. He simply believed God and that was enough.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 5.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.
(Hebrews 11:5)

- What do you think of when I say the words Chumbawumba, Dexy's Midnight Runners, Deep Blue Something, or Right Said Fred? Those are all what we call one hit wonders.
- Well, we kinda saw a seeming one hit wonder in chapter 7 when we looked at Melchizedek. If you recall, he appears suddenly in the narrative of Genesis and just as quickly fades away and only comes up again in one psalm, but the author latches on to that psalm and squeezes it to get every last drop of meaning out of it.
- In a similar way, the author brings up Enoch here though he's seemingly not a very significant OT character. He's mentioned in a few genealogies, but the only extended discourse on him is Genesis 5:21-24. Here is the entirety of that.
 - *When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.* (Genesis 5:21-24)
- The part that the author brings up is the last line. Vs. 24.
 - *Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.* (Genesis 5:24)
- That's mysterious. That's cryptic. And anytime there's something cryptic, people love to speculate and ancient Jews were no different.
 - In fact there were multiple apocryphal books containing speculative & fanciful imaginations of Enoch's heavenly journey where he receives special insights into heavenly mysteries.
 - Interestingly there was so much conjecture about Enoch that later Jewish writers got frustrated and began to add notes in the columns of Genesis 5 saying that God taking Enoch meant that Enoch died.
- The author of Hebrews both avoids the speculation and the pendulum swing of his Jewish brothers and keeps to the text.
- Again, as with Abel, though the Genesis text doesn't emphasize Enoch's faith, that is what the author is focused in on. He does so because of the line, about pleasing God which will be fleshed out in vs. 6 where we'll read that without faith it is impossible to please God. So, it stands to reason that if Enoch pleased God then therefore Enoch must have had faith.
- But where do we get the idea that Enoch pleased God?
- Genesis 5 doesn't say it...or does it?
- Look at how the LXX, the Greek translation of the OT translates Genesis 5:24
 - *And Enoch was well-pleasing to God, and was not found, because God translated him.* (Genesis 5:24, LXX)

- So the author is leaning on the Greek translation here for the idea of Enoch pleasing God. Why is that significant?
- Well, because in 10:38 we read:
 - *but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.* (Hebrews 10:38)
- Notice the word pleasure. So faith corresponds not only with life, but also with pleasing God. Those who please God are rewarded with life and the basis for that is faith.
- We'll see that expounded in vs. 6, but first, I want you to notice something about these first two examples of Abel and Enoch. Notice what they have in common, namely faith. Now, where do their stories depart? Well, in the outcomes of their lives.
- Abel dies. Enoch lives.
- And I want to make two points about that.
- First, notice what rhetorical affect that might have on the first-century readers facing persecution. They haven't YET suffered martyrdom, but that could be around the corner. So the emotional effect of listing out these two saints shows that whether they are delivered from suffering like Enoch or suffer unto death at the hands of their brothers like Abel, God is still faithful and faith is still pleasing.
- Second, notice how this also corresponds to Christ. Christ is killed. Christ's blood cries out from the ground. Abel is a picture of Christ. But so is Enoch as he ascended to heaven and lives forever. So both of these stories forecast aspects of the good news of Christ, as many of these hall of faith accounts will.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 6.

***And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* (Hebrews 11:6)**

- Again, think back to vs. 38,
 - *but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.* (Hebrews 10:38)
- As mentioned before, faith corresponds not only to living, but also pleasing God.
- In the example of Enoch, we saw how faith and pleasing God coincide.
- But how do you please God?
- Well, the author ties that back to faith. He expounds what is implied already in chapter 10.
- He says, that without faith it is impossible to please God. Not improbable, not difficult, impossible. You can't please God by being a good person, giving to charity, going to church, or anything else. Faith and faith alone is the doorway to the pleasure of God.
- And if shrinking back is the posture of disbelief, then drawing near is the posture of faith.
- You see, faith isn't merely some stale academic cognitive reality, it is inherently relational. It draws near. It holds fast.
- So drawing near is the manifestation of belief. But what is being believed?
- The author mentions two things:
 1. That God exists
 2. That He rewards that who seek him.
- Think back to the semi-definition of faith we saw in vs. 1
 - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1)
- And you can see a correlation between how faith is defined and the content of that faith in vs. 6.

- Here's what I mean. That God exists corresponds to the conviction of things not seen. After all, as the apostle John says in his gospel and first epistle, no one has ever seen God.
- So to believe that God exists is to believe in what cannot be seen. As we talked about last week, faith is not antithetical to reason and evidence and sensory perception, but it isn't dependent upon it. Faith isn't irrational, but it is suprarational, it goes beyond the rational.
- And then the first part of the definition is that faith is the assurance of things hoped for. Well, what is hoped for? Rewards. So the second aspect of faith is that not only does God exist, but He rewards those who seek him.
- Perhaps you've heard of the philosopher Immanuel Kant. He's significant in part for his view of ethics for he held that an act is only truly virtuous if done out of a sense of self disinterested duty. The minute that you do something for a reward, benefit, pleasure, or joy, you rob that act of its moral worth.
- That idea has infected Western philosophy, but it isn't the language of the Bible.
- Just look at the Sermon on the Mount
- The beatitudes assume reward. The warnings about anger and lust and love for enemies, assume a desire for reward. Chapter 6 is predicated on our innate desire for reward with the contrast between heavenly and earthly rewards. The question isn't whether, but which. Which rewards will we treasure. And even chapter 7 with its call to ask, seek, and knock and the promises of life and the kingdom demonstrate that God doesn't forbid seeking reward. In fact, He commands it.
- This idea permeates the pages of Scripture.
- And we'll see it come up a number of times in chapter 11 perhaps most clearly in vs. 26
 - *He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.* (Hebrews 11:26)
- Notice again, it isn't whether, but which. Which treasure, which reward.
- We saw that last week in the Blaise Pascal quote about all men seeking happiness without exception. Everything we ever do is always motivated by reward and life consists of competing reward. There is a reward of an extra hour of sleep vs. the reward of an hour of prayer and scripture. The reward of vegging out in the front of the tv or the reward of going on a run or having a constructive conversation. The reward of getting a promotion or the reward of being home more for your family.
- Life is a constant tradeoff and seeking of rewards and that has been designed for us by our good God who creates and gives good gifts and tells us to ask, seek, and knock.
- So that's the second attribute of faith described here. The one who believes, the one who draws near, believes that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.
- Earlier I said that faith is relational. When you enter into a relationship with someone, at least two conditions are met, one cognitive and one relational. First, you need to meet the other person. You need to know that they exist. Its hard to have a relationship with someone you've never heard of or about.
- Second, you need to believe something about that person's character. That they are good, that they are faithful. Or, as in here, that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- Now, just a quick note here. You may be aware that as a good Calvinistic church, we believe that no one seeks God, no not one as Paul writes Romans 3. So how does God reward those who seek Him if no one seeks Him?
- The easiest way to think about this is to say that no 1 seeks God on their own, but those whom God has sought out, called to Himself & given a new nature, will seek Him. So, its true that no 1 seeks God if asking about man's natural condition. But its also true that some seek Him, if

you're talking about the response of the regenerate man born again by God's efficacious grace. In other words, no one seeks Him by means of the flesh, but rather by means of the Spirit and grace.

- Digression over, back to the idea of believing that God rewards those who seek Him. As mentioned earlier, that is built upon the presupposition that God is good, God is faithful, God can be trusted.
- I love what commentator Tom Schreiner says about this:
 - "God is pleased with faith because if he is trusted he is also loved, for trust in God cannot flourish without believing that he is good." (Tom Schreiner)
- Faith in God doesn't demand that God reward you in a particular way, but it does depend on reward. It recognizes not only that God is able to help, but that He is willing. And therefore, if He doesn't help in the way that you assume He would, it submits to His superior wisdom to show why that might be.
- We'll explore that in depth in chapter 12 and why it is that God might not only allow, but ordain our suffering for His glory and our good. In other words, suffering for God's people isn't a contradiction to the idea that God rewards those who seek Him.
- That's another argument that skeptics sometimes bring up against the existence of God.
- They say that if God is all-powerful & all-good then the existence of evil disproves the existence of God as if that charge hasn't already been answered thousands of times. At the end of the day, most of the claims of skeptics, especially those you'll see online, aren't clever, they're just lazy. Objections to Christianity aren't ultimately a result of thinking too much, but too little and too wrong.
- The minute that you understand that God can use evil to accomplish good, as He did with the death of Christ, you've instantly defeated the argument. In other words, if an all good and all powerful God might have good reasons for ordaining evil, then the objection unravels.
- But back to Hebrews. Again, there is a cognitive and relational aspect to faith. We'll see that again in places like vs. 11
 - *By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.* (Hebrews 11:11)
- Notice that in order to believe, she must first know THAT or WHAT God promised. That's the cognitive side. And also that He is faithful, that's the relational. That He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- In other words, faith believes, sometimes even against all appearances, that we will not seek Him in vain. There is a confidence and optimism. And it is grounded on the nature and character of God and His promises. Faith is more than right thinking, but never less.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 7.

By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

- We've now seen the author move from Genesis 4 and the story of Abel, to Genesis 5 and the example of Enoch to chapter 6 and the story of Noah.
- And like Abel and Enoch, Genesis never explicitly comes right out and says that Noah believed God. Then again, it is kinda obvious if you read the story.

- After all, if Noah didn't believe, then he never would have built the ark. A flood was certainly an event as yet unseen which again calls back the description of faith as the conviction of things not seen.
- And yet again, we can see why Noah might be seen as an example of someone who pleased God when you read the LXX, the Greek translation of the OT.
- In the ESV it says this:
 - *These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. (Genesis 6:9)*
- But look at the LXX
 - *But Noah found grace before the Lord God. And these are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man; being perfect in his generation, Noah was well-pleasing to God. (Genesis 6:9, LXX)*
- BTW, Noah is the first person in the Bible to be explicitly called righteous. How was he righteous or just? Well, by faith. And remember, the concern of Hebrews 11 isn't just what faith is, but what faith does. Kinda like James 2 which says that faith without works is dead.
- Remember the author's point in Hebrews. If you believe, then show it, prove it. By holding fast, by drawing near, by not giving up meeting together, by loving one another and suffering well.
- So Noah is a prime example not only of pleasing God, but also of showing specifically how faith leads to action. How he believed that God rewards those who seek him. If he didn't believe that, if he didn't believe God's warning, there is no way that he would have spent years building a big boat in the middle of the desert.
- And this too foreshadows Christ. Noah's faithful actions, His righteous deeds saved His family, even as Christ's righteous act saved His entire family.
- But there is another side to the coin. The story of Noah represents life for the Noahic line, but condemnation for the rest of the world, just as Christ's does as well.
- That ties back in with the idea that faith is the prerequisite to pleasing God. As we read, without faith it is impossible to please God.
- In fact, Paul in Romans would go so far as to say that whatever doesn't proceed from faith is sin. But the author isn't here just commending generic faith, off brand faith. We can't isolate this passage from the larger context in which we've seen that the particular content of pleasing faith, justifying faith is the supremacy and superiority of Jesus Christ.
- That's the faith that pleases God because that's the faith that trusts that God has pleased Himself by means of His own son.
- The faith that pleases God is the faith that is tethered to his promises.
- The first lie in the garden was an assault on the word of God. In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die, God had said.
- What's the serpentine counter? You will not surely die.
- In other words, God is lying. God isn't faithful. God isn't good.
- Back to baseball for a second. Perhaps you've heard the phrase 5 tool player: someone who can hit for batting average, hit for power, run the bases well, throw well and field well.
- Well, that was not me in little league. I was what you might call a 1 tool player. I was fast. I could steal bases. I was so scared of getting hit that I would just lean back in the batter's box and hope to walk, but if I got on base, I was going to steal a lot of bases. I was like the Vince Coleman of Baytown bush league baseball.
- And yet, take that image of a one tool player and apply that to the serpent. The enemy has one tool, one stratagem, one move. All these years later, the enemy's still running the same play. All he has is lies.

- God doesn't love you. There's no hope for your marriage. This addiction is too powerful. The Bible can't be trusted. Jesus isn't real. All Christians are hypocrites.
- The circumstances may have changed: pornography, cancer, a wayward child, familial conflict, unemployment or whatever, but the enemy hasn't changed his game plan.
- His goal is to distract you with deception.
- So faith is the ability to see through those lies. To see through the shadow to the substance.
- As Paul writes in Romans 8:18-25
 - *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*
(Romans 8:18–25)
- May we be a people who walk by faith, not by sight.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- In RC theology, the sacraments are said to work *ex opere operato*, that is by the very fact of the act being performed.
- But the Reformers reacted to that by saying that what gives the sacrament its efficacy is faith.
- In other words, without faith, this is just bread and wine, but by faith, we receive Christ's body and blood.
- So as we examine our hearts this morning, I just want to encourage you to try to weed out any seeds of doubt.
- Perhaps its in regards to a struggle with sin, or with a medical diagnosis, or with some conflict with family or friends, or perhaps an intellectual concern.
- So take a second and pray the prayer of the Father in the Mark 9, where he cries out, I believe, help my unbelief and believe that this meal is medicine for your sickness.
- Examine yourself and we'll partake shortly.
- On the night...