



**Series: Justified (Romans 3:21-5:21)**

**Title: The Progression of Faith**

**Scripture: Romans 4:1-12**

**2025 Summer Scripture: Romans Road (ESV) 1:20; 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; 8:37-39**

## INTRODUCTION

- What happens when you get things out of order? When it comes to our spiritual welfare—becoming a whole, healthy person—the consequences of getting things out of order are immense. What is involved, specifically, is getting two things out of order in the quest to be righteous: God’s part and our part...God’s work and our work.
- When the basis of our worth is performance, the results distort God’s design for us.
- The answer is to go back to God’s instruction manual and learn the right order of things: that performance is not our starting point.
- Let me introduce you to Abraham, who is featured in this passage. Paul chooses Abraham as a key example of a rightly-ordered progression of faith. But if we read things the wrong way with Abraham, we wind up with the performance-driven life. And that’s what Paul wants us to avoid.
- There is a proper sequence to faith, and here is a simple way to grasp it:
  - I am chosen so I believe.
  - I believe so I have faith.
  - I have faith so I obey.

Faith is a journey; Abraham is a prime example. Let’s trace his steps.

1. I AM CHOSEN SO I BELIEVE.

- a. God chooses us before we choose Him.
  - i. Paul made an example of Abraham because it had been easy for the Jews to see him as “choose-worthy,” their great patriarch whose was legendary in his walk with God.
  - ii. God chose Abraham before he had any merit.
  - iii. The Bible is full of reminders that God chooses us before we do anything to impress Him or earn His favor.
  - iv. To be chosen by God is such a powerful thing that it can give you an identity and purpose far greater than anything you or anyone else can contrive for yourself.
- b. Do you understand what it means to be chosen? Let’s use the analogy of marriage to explain this idea of the progression of faith. When I am at a wedding, it is inevitable that I think about the beauty and the power of being chosen.
- c. In the progression of faith, the first step is with God, who makes our belief possible. God’s choice of us has some serious implications for our faith...
  - i. First, it humbles us.
  - ii. But it also honors us.

2. I BELIEVE SO I HAVE FAITH.

- a. The word “believe” seems to have a simple meaning, but it can be difficult to nail down. What is true belief? Paul has some answers for us in this passage as he takes the next step with Abraham...
  - i. In Romans 4:3, Paul specifically and particularly used the word “believe.” (He also repeats this in Romans 10:9-10).
  - ii. God wants us to make a deliberate choice, fully conscious of the implications. Abraham did more than just *believe in* God; he believed God. What is the difference? One is propositional, the other is relational.
  - iii. Look at the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus. What did God require of her? A simple “yes.” (Luke 1:35-38)
- b. Let’s return to the analogy of a wedding. The critical part of the wedding ceremony is the taking of vows.
  - i. The belief for which God desires is like a sincere wedding vow.
  - ii. Jesus, God in human flesh, did not make belief a complicated thing.
- c. It is fair to ask the question, what is the difference between belief and faith? Think of it this way: belief is the gateway to a life of faith. Belief is a choice; faith is a lifestyle.

3. I HAVE FAITH SO I OBEY.

- a. Paul lays the foundation for the proper relationship between faith and obedience.
  - i. Romans 4:4-5 - God provides righteousness and salvation to us while we are ungodly.
  - ii. Ephesians 2:4-9 - God does all the work of changing our status from sinners to saints, from rebels to the redeemed, and from strangers to sons.
  - iii. Colossians 1:9-12 - Our motivation for obedience and service should flow from God's love for us and the call to live out our new identity in Christ.
- b. This is not a self-improvement project, but an offer to change from the inside-out. It reminds me of the story of *The Velveteen Rabbit*.
  - i. God is out to make us real, more than anything we could ever make of ourselves.
- c. A logical question to ask at this point is, "What is the catch?" If God accepts and chooses me and I don't have to earn His love, is it really that easy?
  - i. Our obedience—*our works, good deeds, performance*—is important because it is proof that our belief and faith are real.
  - ii. Hebrews 11:8-9 - In the case of Abraham, he believed God and got up and followed Him.

4. CONCLUSION

- a. In verses 7-8 Paul referred to Psalm 32, David's great testimony about God's forgiveness. David is known for a few colossal mistakes in life, but he also should be remembered for his lifetime of obedience and faithfulness.
- b. *I am chosen, therefore I believe. I believe, therefore I have faith. I have faith, therefore I obey.*
- c. Will you embrace the right order of faith for your life today?