

1. Our faith and our actions are inexorably linked in a sort of spiritual symbiotic relationship. Our actions are the evidence of our belief. This is a common theme that we see consistently reinforced throughout the Bible. A familiar passage in Ephesians 2 demonstrates this, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
2. We are all offered salvation, not because of anything we have done, it is only available because of the abundant generosity of the Father. I believe we accept this free gift by placing our faith in the sacrificial, atoning death of Yeshua, our Messiah. However, I have now come to understand, as Romans 11 teaches, that once we make the choice to enter into covenant with the Most High God, we are grafted into the cultivated olive tree, thus becoming one of the Children of Israel. We become fellow heirs with Christ. We are adopted into His family, We become God’s people.
3. And in so doing, we are placed under the Biblical “jurisdiction” of that family who have always been instructed to conduct themselves according to the authority of the law of Moses. In other words, when we are saved by grace through faith and enter into relationship with the Most High God, there are then expectations of obedience placed upon us. As children of God, there are now things we must do and not do. And as His children, we should want to obey our father.
4. Ephesians 2 goes on to address this exact point in the very next verse, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for GOOD WORKS, which God prepared beforehand that we should WALK IN THEM. This verse seems to clearly confirm two important points. As previously stated, our salvation is not predicated on good works, it is offered as a free gift of God. However, once we enter into that covenant, we must acknowledge that there are good works that the Father previously prepared for us. And his expectation is that we walk in them.
5. This is precisely what Paul explains in Titus 2:11-14, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that,

denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

6. Once again, we see the mention of Good Works that the people of God are expected to practice. Further more we see these good works contrasted against the lawless deeds from which we've been redeemed. We begin to see the significance of this statement when we realize that the Bible does very clearly define sin in 1 John 3:4 as lawlessness, or transgression of the law.
7. This understanding, however, is perhaps most apparent in Matthew 5:16-19 where the Messiah himself makes mention of good works followed immediately by a declaration that the law has not been abolished. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your GOOD WORKS and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
8. I think it's safe to assume that we'd all like to be called great in the kingdom of heaven, and our Savior just told us very directly how we are to accomplish that goal. But in an effort to make sure this point is abundantly clear, John penned the following passage in stunningly clear and concise language. This passage was, for me, a devastatingly convicting verse when I finally read it without my modern church doctrinal bias. It was a spiritual punch to the gut that caused me to re-evaluate much of what I believed and practiced. 1 John 2:3-6, “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does

not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to WALK in the same way in which HE WALKED.”

9. So when we consider all of these passages together, a notable pattern emerges:
  - Salvation is not based on works
  - Once saved, there are good works, the law, which we are to walk in
  - Yeshua perfectly kept the law and practiced these good works as an example for us
  - Yeshua said the law is not abolished
  - We are told we should walk as Yeshua walked
  - We are told that if we truly know of Messiah, we would keep his commandments
  
10. If we can simply allow ourselves to accept the text for what it says, without any preconceived notions, this becomes pretty easy “scriptural math” to add up. We should be doing our best to live like our savior, and he kept the Torah, he obeyed the Father’s instructions given through Moses. This is precisely what Paul challenges us to do in 1 Corinthians 11:1 when he says “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.”
  
11. To be sure, we must first come to faith, and only then can the good works manifest in our walk. If you think about it, we would never develop a desire to obey Torah without first placing our faith in the savior. But in the same way, we must not come to faith in the Messiah only and then never make an effort to walk as he walked. In the end, our actions reveal our belief. This is precisely what the second chapter of James addresses.
  
12. So good works are the product of our faith. But at the same time, our faith is strengthened by these good works. This is certainly true for traditional “service” based activities like volunteering in homeless shelters, food banks, or youth groups. However, it has been my experience that an earnest effort to obediently follow all the

commandments of God to the best of my ability has exponentially expanded both my faith and understanding of the Scriptures. Without question, I learned more in my first year of keeping Torah than I did in the previous ten years of attending regular Sunday church and weekly small groups.

13. For this reason alone, I would encourage any believer who genuinely loves the Father to consider these issues very seriously. The Father has told us how he expects us to walk out our faith. He even graciously provided an example through his son of what it looks like to walk out the faith perfectly. And while we could never hope to achieve that same perfection, it should be our goal to strive to be AS MUCH like him as we can. Quite simply, we should do what he did, and avoid what he avoided.
14. Scripture teaches that good works should be the natural result of our faith, not the cause of it. A desire to obediently keep the law of Moses should NOT motivated by a belief that it earns salvation. But rather, it is BECAUSE we have been freely offered salvation that we are inspired to try and follow the law. It is an act of submission and obedience to the authority of the Most High. It is an expression of love and gratitude for the abundant grace we have been shown.