

Faith and Good Works According to the Catholic Epistle of Saint James

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Abstract

The Catholic Epistle of Saint James is one of the most obvious texts in the New Testament literature, regarding the close connection between Faith and Good Works. The appropriate role of works in Christian life is essential for a healthy understanding of the Gospel. Faith without works does not benefit in anything. James could not be more explicit, especially in 2:24. He fights against the concept of inactive or false faith, which lacks the fruit of salvation. He does not support works apart from faith, but he is crucially concerned with showing that a living faith must validate its dynamic character by its deeds. Consequently, he confronts a dead Orthodoxy and also a self-satisfied attitude towards grace. However, the author does not contradict Saint Paul, as understood in Ephesians 2:8-10. Rather, they are in complete agreement with each other. James and Paul fought different enemies and thus they addressed different questions. James fought against the lifeless Orthodoxy that was prevalent in his audience, while Paul combated the legalists. Hence, both James and Paul could agree and could conclude that the faith that saves is never alone. James merely emphasized that those deeds, which run from faith, are in accordance with the law of God in order to show the authenticity of faith.