

A Divine Paradox

We have in Christianity, an interesting paradox (what in Christianity is not paradoxical!?) regarding the way in which we view ourselves. On the one hand, God loved us enough to become a man and suffer and die, that our sins may be forgiven, thus opening the way to right relationship with Him. On the other hand, because of our errant choices before the Holy God - read that sins - we are totally vile, unrighteous, undone and subject to His wrath. As John Baptist said, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; and he who does not believe the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36) How are we to make sense of this situation in which we are at once, loved and loathed by the same God? In this world that exalts self-esteem above almost all else, we in the Church of Jesus Christ must strive understand God's meaning in all this.

It's not an easy answer, but it is a simple one, and it is contained in the first part of John Baptist's statement. It actually involves a concept from the world of accounting; "to impute". To impute is to credit, ascribe or attribute something to the account of another. It is through understanding a divine transaction involving imputation, that we can understand this paradox of loving and loathing.

The entirety of chapter 4 in the New Testament book of Romans speaks of this imputation process. We learn that Abraham, the Father of the Hebrew people and the man reputed in scripture to be the Father of Faith (Rom4:16), had righteousness *imputed* unto him, *based on his faith* in God. Verse 11 of that chapter says that when Abraham received the sign of the covenant with God, the sign was a "seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had". That faith was *imputed* to him as righteousness.

Although Abraham was far from the perfect man - a man of like passions and sins as we, of whom the bible records numerous failings - "his faith was imputed [counted, reckoned] as righteousness" (Rom4:11, 22).

While God loathed Abraham's sinful behavior, *allowing Abraham to reap the earthly consequences of that sinful behavior*, at the same time He loved Abraham himself, *allowing him to reap the Heavenly consequences of His faith... righteousness and salvation!*

Thanks be to God that even though we, like Abraham, may reap the earthly consequences of our sins, we, like Abraham can reap the Heavenly consequences of our faith.

Observe...

Now it was not written for Abraham's sake alone that it was accounted to him, but for us also, to whom it was going to be imputed, those believing on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our transgressions, and was raised for our justification (Rom4:23-25).

Rejoice dearly beloved, that while our sins make us *unrighteous* before God, our faith in Christ's work and resurrection makes us *righteous* before God. Just like Abraham, our Faith is imputed to us as righteousness. Have faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead, and be right with God.

Pastor