

Timothy Keller's Making Sense of God - does belief help clarify and increase love?

This book thinks of the believer and the unbeliever who has doubts about the claims Christianity makes for God. It seeks to argue that faith in God is the best way to become loving.

Keller writes, "You harm yourself when you love anything more than God." He goes on to say that if you put your children before God that means you are seeking your own significance and feeling of security in them. That means you want them to love you back and live up to your expectations of what makes their lives good and happy.

This is a really odd argument. If you have God you are seeking your significance and security in him - it is still about you and you will hate him if you think he does not love you back and dealing with all your expectations. You only love him for you think he does not hate you. But the hate you would give him if he did not is poised at him. You are prepared to hate God deep down. It is terrible to accuse somebody of suspect goodness for putting their children before anything even God. If love does that then imagine what loving God who demands all our love from you would do!

Keller candidly admits, "not even the strongest believers love God perfectly, nor does anybody get close to doing so."

It is people who don't love God enough who consider themselves having the right to tell you about him and invite you to him and pray to him and invite you to pray. They like Keller, tell you,

"nothing can give us the infinite joy God can."

"You harm yourself when you love anything more than God".

Keller even says you hurt the object of your love! You cannot get a person to love someone you don't love properly and therefore do not understand properly yourself. You get them to love an illusion based on that person.

Surely the more you know God and that God is there the worse you are if you do him wrong so to talk of such loving God imperfectly is far short of the truth. It is malice and totally inexcusable. The bigger and deeper the faith the worse the intention to sin.

He says that the love that is needed "cannot be generated simply by an act of the will." He says it is a process and there will be many setbacks.

What an interesting admission. When confronted with the terrible suffering of the innocent believers say that God has to allow evil so that we may have free will. Free will is not free if it cannot just love. It is not worth all the trouble and pain. Suppose you are a Nazi dictator. You cannot say you have free will when you remove the free will of others. When you force unfreedom on the will of others how do you know that genes or something are not doing the same thing to you? It is possible! You know you can be unfree and feel free like when you take too much alcohol.

The argument that you cannot force yourself or your heart to love is saying we decide what we want God or another to be and if they fit we will love them. This clearly shows that those who say they love God and others without reasons and conditions are lying. They love God in a threatening way, "I will love you but if you change..."

Theologians would say, "If you feel nothing for God and think you don't like or don't believe what he stands for and if you decide to be faithful anyway that is an act of love though it is not warm. It is the best you can do and so God has to accept it and develop it in you."

This contradicts the notion that if you struggle to help others that is a sign you are not really good. You don't really want to be. The goodness has not touched your heart. Religion holds your approach to God to a different standard. This totally contradicts its notion that all love belongs to God so when you love what God has made it is only out of respect for him who made it.

Keller says, "A kind of vague god, a god of love, an abstract god will never change your heart." Keller writes, "Love is only possible between persons."

Taking the two statements together shows that you need a warm human like God. But such a God cannot exist. Philosophers say that to call God good is wrong for the best and most accurate way to describe him is to say he is not evil. God is described in negative language - the term they use is univocal.

Keller quotes Edwards as saying that we are drawn to people who make us happy and we tend to love those who affirm us. But if they do not do this or stop doing it we become infuriated and jealous. This is because we love them for our sake. Interestingly the Christian doctrine is that we do not give 99% of love to God and 1% to others but give the 100% to God which is what is required by our duty to love God for his own sake, and each other for God's sake. One good thing about doing that is instead of having our happiness in us we have it in them which means that whatever joy they feel we will feel it for their sake.

God is the one that creates diseases and disasters that surpass anything other people can do to you. Yet he demands total love from us more than what a wife would demand of her husband. Christians not going around angry and furious at everybody's neglect of God is a sign that they only imagine they think there is a God. If they were great believers, they would act the same way as one would if let down horribly by a fellow human being. They would still hate and be mad at a person who makes them happy for their own good. Why are they not mad at God and easily turned into haters of religion? Maybe they think the terrible things God does to others compensates for what he does to them!

