

## Rector's Book Review with Timothy Keller: The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness

### Continued

In the third and final chapter of this devotional Tim Keller tells us how to get that transformed view of the self or identity that is promised in the Gospel. He explains it in a kind of short-hand or abbreviation of the Pauline theology of the passage from first Corinthians cited above (and throughout Paul's epistles)—in terms of 'verdict' and 'performance'. Best to let Tim Keller explain what he means (or what he is telling us Paul means) in his own words:

*Do you realize that it is only in the gospel of Jesus Christ that you get the verdict before the performance?*

*The atheist might say that they get their self-image from being a good person. They are a good person, and they hope that eventually they will get a verdict that confirms that they are a good person. Performance leads to the verdict. For the Buddhist too, performance leads to the verdict. If you are a Muslim, performance leads to the verdict. All this means that every day, you are in the courtroom, every day you are on trial. That is the problem.*

*But Paul is saying that in Christianity, the verdict leads to performance. It is not the performance that leads to the verdict.*

*In Christianity, the moment we believe, God says 'This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Or take Romans 8:1 which says 'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'.*

*In Christianity, the moment we believe, God imputes Christ's perfect performance to us as if it were our own and adopts us into His family. In other words, God can say to us just as He once said to Christ, 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'*

What a truly liberating message. Our life may sometimes feel like we are on trial every single day. But Paul is telling us the trial is over. You are out of the courtroom. It is gone. It is over. The *ultimate* verdict is in. God in Christ has set you free. 'You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love'.

A good book for a hot summer day. A profound message, more liberating than every 4th of July.