Since God is love, to abide in love is to abide in God. This describes the mutual relationship between God and every believer. And it describes the meaning of God’s actions in our lives. God’s holy love reached out to us and saved us. And God’s love has taken up residence in our hearts and become a principle of life and activity. It is this love we have come to “know and have believed”. (1 John 4:16a)

I. 1 JOHN 4:17—PRESENT COMMUNION...FUTURE RESULTS!

(16) “And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” (17) “By this, love is perfected with us that we may have confidence in the day of judgment because as He is, so also are we in this world.” 1 John 4:16-17

This life of love the believer has come to know and believed has a tremendous impact on this present life and the future! Abiding in God and He in us brings love to its intended goal in our lives. The result is that we have a present communion with the Lord and a confidence in the future day of judgment John says here in 1 John 4:17:

A. PRESENT COMMUNION - 1 JOHN 4:17a

“By this, love is perfected with us…” 1 John 4:17a

John begins with “By this”. He refers back to the previous verse, back to a life-transforming relationship with God Himself Who is love. That’s the only possible foundation John can build on. It is the credible truth we can base our life on.

Then John uses a peculiar phrase by saying, “By this, love is perfected with us...”. This is unusual because it seems to make more sense to say that God’s love has been perfected “in us” rather than “with us”. But of course John is quite intentional with his words. This preposition in the Greek refers to “with us” as “our companion”. God’s love is the inspiration and abiding companion to our love. His love has reached its goal in our lives when we also love and communicate it to others. This God-prompted love in our life results in present communion with God!

B. FUTURE RESULT - 1 JOHN 4:17b

“By this, love is perfected with us that we may have confidence in the day of judgment because as He is, so also are we in this world.” 1 John 4:16

The second result of God’s love perfected with us, is that we have confidence in the future day of judgment. John refers to the confidence we can have before Jesus Christ at His coming. This confidence flows from an intimate relationship of love already established with the One Who is our Judge on that future day.:

John continues to offer assurance to the one question that haunts so many people. What will happen when I stand before God one day? How can I have any confidence before God on that day of judgment? Most of us will admit we are sinners and that sin condemns each and every person.

We must note that John is absolutely certain there is a day of judgment. There is no question about this fact. It is an absolute. Life is not an endless cycle. Time is moving towards its God appointed goal when Jesus Christ will return in great power and glory to “judge the living and the dead.” (Matthew 25:31-46, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10) For the believer in Jesus Christ, this judgment refers to the time when we appear before Him, not to determine our salvation, but the evaluation of our life and how we lived. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10) Our salvation is secure because of Christ. Paul wrote in Romans 8:37-39 that he was convinced there was nothing that could “separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.”

The idea of judgment is an unpopular subject today. But it wasn’t any different in John’s day. We don’t like the idea of having to give an account to God for our actions. We think we can discount the idea. But the truth of it won’t just go away. Judgment is fixed in God’s timetable and it will surely come. It is an unalterable, inevitable day. The thoughts and deeds of all men and women who are living or ever have lived will be judged.

So how then are we to have confidence, assurance in the day of judgment that is to come? How can a believer have confidence that we will be okay in the face of this certain day where we stand before God and give account for how we spent our life? John’s answer is both surprising and remarkable. He writes, “that we may have confidence in the day of judgment because as He is, so also are we in this world.”

Note that John uses the pronoun “we” here. He cannot separate himself from his readers as he speaks of when the end
1 JOHN 4:17 – PRESENT COMMUNION...FUTURE RESULTS!

comes into view. Only if we abide in Christ will we have confidence before Him on that last day.

This word confidence is used to describe a Christian’s boldness of approach to God. It refers to the believers’ confidence with which Christians may draw near to God on the judgment day. Only if we abide in Him and He in us, will we have confidence before Him on that last day.

So think through Johns’ reasoning here. We know our standing depends on faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. But John wants us to understand that faith alone that justifies always manifests itself in a transformed life. John is adamant that likeness to Christ is the evidence that God truly does indwell us and that we truly believe in His Son. (2 Corinthians 3:18) ‘This is what John means when he says that, “love is perfected with us”.’ (1 John 4:17) This is what John has been saying over and over in his Epistle.⁴

John never tires of reminding us that the Christian life is a morally transformed life, which is patterned after the likeness of Jesus Christ, God’s Son. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul writes about the “new creation” we are becoming “in Christ”. This is nothing less than conformity to Christ, the perfect Son. And this is God’s ultimate purpose, to conform us “to the image of His Son.” (Romans 8:29) So when John talks about “love is perfected with us”, perfected love is becoming like Christ, “because as He is so also are we in this world.”

Wow what an amazing statement! “Because as He is”, as Christ is, John chooses words that mark a close resemblance. It is a comparative that is present tense. It is not “as He was”, rather “as He is”. This refers to Jesus Christ’s unchanging nature. As Christ is eternally...past, present and future! And the comparison marks a close resemblance, “so are we in this world.”

This assures us that our confidence in not presumptuous on our part. Rather our love produced likeness of Christ, fashioned by God in us is the basis for the confidence that our Judge will deal with us as a friend. The comparison indicates that what is true of Christ in His unchanging character is already true of us while still “in the world.” It is a likeness of love, in love.⁸

MacArthur says that “this stunning statement means that God the Father treats saints the same way He does His Son Jesus Christ. When we reach our final accounting we will see the fulfillment of 1 John 3:2, “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.””

So a believer can know with confidence that we have a present communion with God now and a future result of that relationship in that we can have confidence, a boldness before God because of solid evidence of a living, personal relationship with Him. We can live with confidence as we look to the day when Christ returns and we stand before God. (1Corinthians 3:9-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, James 1:12, Revelation 2:10)

We must know that the absence of such love as John speaks of, self-denying service for the sake of others, if absent betrays, any who might claim a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. When we see Christ like love shaping our lives, and the life of our churches, then we know God Himself is in us and with us. And the world will know as well. Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

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