

1 John 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Analysis

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. John summarizes his teaching on God's love. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (kai hēmeis egnōkamen kai pepisteukamen tēn agapēn hēn echei ho theos en hēmin). The perfect tenses emphasize past experience with continuing results—the apostles (and believers generally) came to know and believe God's love, and continue in that knowledge and faith. Ginōskō (know) involves experiential knowledge; pisteuō (believe) involves trust and reliance. Both are necessary—we know God's love demonstrated in Christ and believe it personally applies to us.

"God is love" (ho theos agapē estin)—this profound statement (repeated from 4:8) defines God's essential nature. Love isn't merely God's attribute but His essence. This doesn't mean God is an abstract concept "love" or that all love is God (pantheism), but that God's very being is characterized by self-giving, other-centered love supremely demonstrated in Christ. Understanding this transforms theology—God's actions (creation, redemption, discipline, judgment) all flow from His loving nature.

"And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (kai ho menōn en tē agapē en tō theō menei kai ho theos en autō). Living in love means abiding in God because God is love. This creates inseparable connection between loving God and

loving others—we cannot claim to abide in God (who is love) while failing to love. Conversely, genuine love for others evidences God's indwelling and our abiding in Him. Love is both Christian duty and Christian proof.

Historical Context

The statement "God is love" was revolutionary in the ancient world. Greek philosophy conceived god as unmoved mover, distant and dispassionate. Roman religion portrayed capricious deities motivated by self-interest. Judaism emphasized God's justice and holiness alongside His covenant love. Christianity uniquely proclaimed that God's very essence is love—not sentimental affection but costly, sacrificial commitment demonstrated in Christ's cross.

This truth grounded Christian ethics. If God is love, His children must love (be like their Father). Early Christians' radical love distinguished them from surrounding culture. However, this statement also required careful understanding—God's love doesn't contradict His justice, holiness, or wrath. Rather, His love satisfies justice through Christ's atonement, maintains holiness by transforming believers, and will ultimately judge those who reject His loving offer of salvation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does knowing and believing God's personal love for you (not merely abstract divine benevolence) affect your daily life?
2. If God's very nature is love, how does this inform your understanding of His other attributes (holiness, justice, wrath)?
3. What's the connection between dwelling in love (loving others) and dwelling in God, and what does your love-life reveal?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ήμεῖς	έγνώκαμεν	καὶ	πεπιστεύκαμεν	τὴν	ἀγάπη	ἢν
And	we	have known	And	believed	G3588	love	that
G2532	G2249	G1097	G2532	G4100		G26	G3739
ἔχει	ό	Θεὸς	ἐν	ήμῖν	ό	Θεὸς	ἀγάπη
hath	G3588	God	in	us	G3588	God	love
G2192		G2316	G1722	G2254		G2316	G26
μένει	ἐν	τῇ	ἀγάπη	ἐν	τῷ	Θεὸς	μένει
dwellet	in	G3588	love	in	G3588	God	dwellet
G3306			G26	G1722		G2316	G3306
καὶ	ό	And	G3588			And	G2532
Θεὸς	ἐν	αὐτῷ					
God	in	him					
G2316	G1722	G846					

Additional Cross-References

1 John 3:24 (Parallel theme): And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

1 John 3:1 (Love): Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

1 John 3:16 (Love): Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Psalms 31:19 (Faith): Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

1 Corinthians 2:9 (Love): But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Isaiah 64:4 (References God): For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

John 6:69 (Faith): And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org