

1 John 4:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

Analysis

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. John connects perfected love with confident anticipation of judgment. "Herein is our love made perfect" (en toutō teteleiōtai hē agapē meth' hēmōn)—love reaches its goal or completion "with us" (variant readings have "in us" or "among us"). The perfect tense indicates completed action with continuing state. God's love achieves its purpose in believers when it produces confident assurance.

"That we may have boldness in the day of judgment" (hina parrēsian echōmen en tē hēmera tēs kriseōs). Parrēsia means confidence, boldness, or freedom of speech—the opposite of cowering fear. "The day of judgment" refers to Christ's return and final judgment when all accounts are settled. Believers can face this day with confidence, not terror, because of Christ's work and love's perfecting in them.

"Because as he is, so are we in this world" (hoti kathōs ekeinos estin kai hēmeis esmen en tō kosmō toutō). The comparison is startling—as Christ is (in His glorified, accepted state before the Father), so are we even now in this world. This refers to our legal standing (justified, accepted in Christ) and our identity (God's beloved children, sharing Christ's status). We are not yet what we shall be (3:2), but our position before God is secure because we're in Christ. This certainty produces boldness regarding judgment—we face it not in our own righteousness but in Christ's.

Historical Context

The "day of judgment" was central to Jewish and Christian eschatology. Old Testament prophets warned of the Day of the Lord when God would judge the nations and vindicate His people. Jesus taught extensively about final judgment (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:28-29). This wasn't abstract theology but practical warning and comfort—warning to unbelievers to flee coming wrath, comfort to believers that they will be vindicated.

The Reformation recovery of justification by faith alone made sense of John's statement. If we're justified by works, judgment day brings terror—who has done enough? But if we're justified by faith in Christ, judgment brings vindication—Christ's righteousness covers us. Our status before God matches Christ's status ("as he is, so are we") because we're united to Him. This produces the boldness John describes.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does understanding your current status before God (as Christ is, so are you) affect your anticipation of judgment day?
2. What's the relationship between love being perfected in you and having boldness in judgment—why does one produce the other?
3. Do you currently face the prospect of Christ's return and final judgment with boldness or fear, and why?

Interlinear Text

ἐν τούτῳ τετελείωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν ἵνα
Herein this made perfect G3588 love is our G2257 that
G1722 G5129 G5048 G26 G3326 G2443

παρρησίαν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇς κρίσεως ὅτι
boldness we may have Herein G3588 the day G3588 of judgment because
G3954 G2192 G1722 G2250 G2920 G3754

καθὼς ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ
as he is so we are Herein G3588 world
G2531 G1565 G2076 G2532 G2249 G2070 G1722 G2889

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G5129

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:12 (Love): No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 2:28 (Parallel theme): And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

1 John 2:5 (Love): But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

Romans 8:29 (Parallel theme): For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

1 John 3:3 (Parallel theme): And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

John 15:20 (Parallel theme): Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also.

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.

2 Peter 3:7 (Judgment): But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Matthew 10:25 (Parallel theme): It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

James 2:22 (Creation): Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

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