

1 John 4:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Analysis

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. John describes God's love's ultimate demonstration. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us" (en toutō ephanerōthē hē agapē tou theou en hēmin)—God's love wasn't merely proclaimed but visibly demonstrated. Phaneroō (φανερόω) means to make visible or reveal clearly. The phrase "toward us" (en hēmin) could also mean "among us" or "in us"—God's love was shown toward us, demonstrated among us, and works within us.

"Because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world" (hoti ton huion autou ton monogenē apestalken ho theos eis ton kosmon). Monogenēs (μονογενής) means unique, one-of-a-kind—not merely the only Son but the uniquely beloved Son sharing the Father's nature. The perfect tense "sent" (apestalken) emphasizes the completed mission with continuing results. God initiated this sending; the Son's mission was the Father's plan. "Into the world" indicates the incarnation—entering the realm of human existence and sin to accomplish redemption.

"That we might live through him" (hina zēsōmen di' autou)—the purpose clause reveals God's loving intention. Zaō means to live, not merely exist but possess genuine, eternal life. "Through him" indicates Christ as the means or channel—life comes through His person and work. We were dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1); Christ

came that we might have life. This is love—God taking the initiative to give life to those dead in sin through the costly gift of His unique Son.

Historical Context

The title "only begotten Son" (monogenēs) appears distinctively in Johannine literature (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). It emphasizes Christ's unique relationship to the Father—not created or adopted but eternally begotten, sharing the Father's divine nature. This countered Arian heresy (Christ as created being) and Adoptionism (Jesus as mere human adopted by God). Christ's deity was essential for His saving work—only God can save; only man must save; therefore, the Savior must be God-man.

The concept of God sending His Son into the world echoes Old Testament promises of Messiah's coming. Unlike pagan myths of gods temporarily appearing in human form, Christianity affirms the eternal Son's true incarnation—permanently taking human nature while retaining divine nature. This sending demonstrated incomprehensible love—the Father giving His beloved Son, the Son willingly coming to die for sinners.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's initiative in sending His Son (rather than our seeking God) display the nature of His love?
2. What does God's willingness to send His only begotten, uniquely beloved Son reveal about the depth of His love for sinners?

3. How should understanding that eternal life comes 'through' Christ alone affect your evangelism and confidence in salvation?

Interlinear Text

ἐν	τούτῳ	ἐφανερώθη	ἡ	ἀγάπη	τοῦ	Θεοῦ	ἐν	ἡμῖν
In	this	was manifested	G3588	the love	G3588	of God	In	us
G1722	G5129	G5319		G26		G2316	G1722	G2254
ὅτι	τὸν	υἱὸν	αὐτοῦ	τὸν	μονογενῆ	ἀπέσταλκεν	ὁ	
because	G3588	Son	him	G3588	only begotten	sent	G3588	
G3754		G5207	G846		G3439	G649		
Θεοῦ	εἰς	τὸν	κόσμον	ἵνα	ζήσωμεν	δι'	αὐτοῦ	
of God	into	G3588	the world	that	we might live	through	him	
G2316	G1519		G2889	G2443	G2198	G1223	G846	

Additional Cross-References

John 3:16 (Love): For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

1 John 5:11 (References God): And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Romans 8:32 (Parallel theme): He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

John 6:57 (Parallel theme): As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

1 John 4:10 (Love): Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

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.

John 6:51 (Parallel theme): I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

John 10:10 (Parallel theme): The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

John 3:18 (References God): He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Hebrews 1:5 (Parallel theme): For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

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