



[1 John 4:15-17](#)

(15) Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (16) And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. (17) Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

New King James Version

In 1 John 4, John makes a rather startling statement regarding our union with Christ. It is puzzling in that its practical application is vague to us because we are unfamiliar with the possibilities. Readers usually take a glimpse of it then move on, wondering about its meaning. The words themselves are simple enough, but their very simplicity adds to its confounding nature because, if it truly means what it appears to say, it is too good to be true! Lacking biblical evidence and a logical explanation for reaching such a wonderful conclusion, we pass on.

[1 John 4:15](#) says, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of [God](#), God abides in him, and he in God." The context is obviously our union with God, as the words "abide" and "in" confirm. Verse 16 continues the thought: "And we have known and believed the [love](#) that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." *Abide* means "to live," "to continue with," or "to go on with." By substituting these synonyms, the last phrase reads, "He who continues or lives in love, continues or lives in God, and God in him."

The verse emphasizes an ongoing, unbroken, intimate relationship. Nothing can be closer than for one to be in another! Since John defines love in [1 John 5:3](#) as keeping the commandments, the word "love" in this verse indicates that it is being reciprocated between God and us, and it is what facilitates the continuance of the union and relationship. These verses in fact confirm what Jesus said on the eve of His crucifixion:

If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He

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will give you [another Helper](#), that He may abide with you forever. The Spirit of [truth](#), which [the world](#) cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ([John 14:15-17](#))

In verse 23, Jesus drops the term "Helper," showing more specifically who would be living in us: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." "Keep" indicates that the love of which Jesus speaks is not merely an affection, as *keep* means "to maintain, continue or carry on." It is therefore active and dynamic.

Has that wondrous promise actually taken place? Are we so united with God, so at one with Him, that [Jesus Christ](#), our Creator, Savior, Redeemer, and High Priest has made us the place of His abode? If so, do our lives reflect that He is there? Are we giving evidence of His presence?

[1 John 4:17](#) contains the astounding statement: "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world."

Peter announces in [1 Peter 4:17](#), "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begin with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey [the gospel](#) of God?" For those of us "in the church," our judgment began with God's calling and our [conversion](#), and it continues to this very moment. Judgment will come to those living following [Christ's return](#) during the Millennium and to those in the [second resurrection](#) during the Great White Throne period.

Are we experiencing boldness or confidence (the Greek word can be translated either way; see [Hebrews 3:6](#)), or are we ashamed of Jesus Christ? Do we hide what we are? John suggests that we should be living boldly because we have a foundation of confidence that we are under the blood of Jesus Christ and have begun to keep His commandments. Are we ashamed about talking about our [baptism](#) into the church of God, His Family? Are we fearful about talking about specific doctrines, not to convert others, but simply to state our beliefs?

It is interesting that the Greek word translated "boldness" literally means "freedom of speech." It implies that nothing hinders a person. Love is being perfected in us so that we may be unhindered in our submission to God while under judgment. [1 John 4:17](#) then goes on to say, "As He is, so are we in this world." "He" is capitalized. The publishers have done this to draw attention to the fact that this pronoun refers to Christ Himself.

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The subject here is not another human being but the Deity, and John is saying we can be bold because we share a commonality with Him. What did He accomplish? Where does He stand in relation to God and to us? How did He live His life? Jesus Christ lived His life confidently and boldly. The apostle is essentially saying that, when God looks at us, He sees us as though we were Jesus Christ! Has anybody ever lived life closer to God than Jesus?

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Offerings of Leviticus \(Part Eight\): Conclusion \(Part One\)](#)

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