

Love

No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us . . . 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 (1 John 4:12,16).

The two signs of the covenant, baptism and communion, representing death to self and abiding in Christ, summarize all the other requirements of our covenant. There is one command which summarizes even these two, the greatest requirement of all, love. When we are walking in love, we are walking in God, for God is love!

Since God is infinitely great and complex, love is infinitely great and complex. God hates sin. Since God is love, even His hatred of sin has its source in love. Love is the summary and fulfillment of all the other commandments (see Matthew 22:35-40 and Romans 13:8-10), so a complete definition for love would include every command and every bit of wisdom in the Bible. The study of any command or counsel in the Bible is a study of a small portion of God's love. Christ said, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love*; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love (John 15:9-10)."

Jesus then said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13)." A simple definition for love is pouring out of yourself into another. One of the best illustrations of love is the example of how to love a wife, in Ephesians 5:25, 28-33. Because the husband has become one with his wife, he should care for her in the same way he would treat *himself*, for she is now a part of him:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her . . . So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own

wife even as himself.”

With the example of how Christ loves the church, we have one of the best illustrations of full spiritual love from a good physical marriage. The partners treat their spouse *as if* they were poured out into their partner. Christ, however, did pour out His Spirit into us.

This spiritual pouring is a pouring out of oneself as well as a pouring into another. As an example, the difference between Christ’s and a demon’s pouring himself into a person is that the demon only pours in; the demon comes only to conquer. It is unwilling to pour out of itself, to give of itself, in sacrifice for the person’s benefit. Christ pours out of Himself on our behalf, taking our life upon Himself, sacrificing His life, becoming one with us, becoming friend as well as Lord.

Jesus described how He would pour Himself out (or in this case, sow Himself into us) at the cross when He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be (John 12:24-26).” His description of how He would pour Himself out for us is accompanied by the command to do as He had done. By following Him in this sacrificial act of love, we will find ourselves abiding where He abides.

Christ poured Himself out into you. If you have no room for what He is pouring in, you need first to pour out more of yourself into God and into others. On the cross, Christ’s hands were pierced. Christ offered His life to you. One thing remains. Your hands need to be pierced. Your life, in turn, needs to be offered.