

Song of Solomon 8:5-7

Song of Solomon 8:6,7 Hang my locket around your neck, wear my ring on your finger. Love is invincible facing danger and death. Passion laughs at the terrors of hell. The fire of love stops at nothing - it sweeps everything before it. Flood waters can't drown love, torrents of rain can't put it out. Love can't be bought, love can't be sold - it's not to be found in the marketplace. (The Message)

There is disagreement among the translations as to who the speaker is in verse 5. The NKJV has a relative, Gledhill has the woman speaking but I like the opinion of The Message which has the man respond to the observation offered by the chorus. This is typical of the Song of Solomon and yet, the rich themes and teachings of the book find their way through to the soul that searches for them.

The young couple is seen arm in arm. This is an expression of companionship. It also conveys a desire to be seen by others as belonging to each other. This is the experience of romantic love from its first stages of early dating moving through the steps of engagement, marriage and parenting. Our relationships become profoundly integrated into our self-identity

so much so that you and your spouse become emotionally, physically, financially, and even legally one. The young man seems to comment on this experience from a generational perspective. "What has happened to us is what happened to our parents and so forth." God has made us to be what and who we are.

The young woman answers, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; for its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame." (NKJV) In either translation the sentiment of the young woman is clear. She seeks an exclusive relationship with her young man. She will give herself without reservation to him but he must do the same toward her and their mutual and exclusive relationship must be recognized for what it is in the community. The locket around the neck and the ring on the finger are each necessities. The passion or jealousy in verse 6 is not an insecurity that imagines the worst and thus seeks to control the other. It is instead a clear commitment to and expectation of exclusivity understood as an absolute necessity to the existence of the relationship.

It is in this context that love's power, longevity and value are celebrated in verse 7. If you have a love with a partner that has redefined who you are and you feel through this experience a connection to the past and a confidence in the future based on the mutuality and exclusivity of your relationship then you have something of more value than any commodity on earth. Love can't be bought. It can't be sold. Those who devalue this kind of love are losers. They have made a bad bargain, one they will forever regret.

It is this kind of a relationship that God seeks with His people, one defined by commitment, mutuality and exclusivity. He sought this first with Adam and Eve in the garden. He sought this with the Patriarchs and then with Israel on Mount Sinai, and throughout each phase of the history of that nation. This is the kind of relationship Jesus sought when He called the disciples from the lives they had been living to one in which their single purpose was to follow Him. Too many, in distrust, distance themselves from such a relationship with God fearing that to so engage would somehow rob them of the things they desire or want to enjoy. We fail to offer God exclusivity - ultimately and always to our own regret.