

PP The Lord of the Rings: A Seal Upon Your Heart

Text Song of Songs 8:6-7

Illus **PP** An English professor wrote the words “Woman without her man is a savage” on the blackboard and directed his students to punctuate it correctly.

PP The men wrote: “Woman, without her man, is a savage.”

PP The women wrote: “Woman! Without her, man is a savage.”

Marriage is beautiful, it is difficult, it is joyful, it is challenging

It may be the hardest effort many of us will ever undertake and at the same time it can produce the greatest joy

All of these elements are found in a book of the bible called the Song of Songs which tells us about a man and a woman who began to love each other

They are identified as Solomon and the Shulammitte

It’s a two layer book however, for Solomon represents Christ and the Shulammitte the Church

We are going to look at the love of the couple that is shown in its various stages

The book opens with a man and a woman growing in their passion and longing for one Another

As it progresses so does their love to the point where it is painful to be apart from each Other

They marry and their love was pure, strong, and free and beautiful

But it isn’t long before they experience their first and very painful conflict

Illus Shortly after the first Rocky movie, Sylvester Stallone was asked whether he thought boxing was good for physical conditioning. He said, “Boxing is a wonderful sport for conditioning as long as you can holler ‘Cut’”

Many think marriage is wonderful as long as you have the option of calling it quits if pain arises

For Solomon and his young bride, they had a painful conflict in chapter 5, but they didn’t quit, they worked through it and their love for each other matured and grew even greater

And we come to our text in chapter 8:5, ***“Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?”***

The focus is on her as the couple was walking through the countryside

Let’s pause for a moment and see what this tells us

Men, notice with me, her posture, ***‘leaning on her beloved’***

It is a picture of oneness and unity

It’s also a picture of her dependency and vulnerability to her husband

And as we are allowed a peek into what she is about to say to him, we need to keep in mind that he is listening, she is speaking from her heart that loves him completely

Picture the scene of this married couple with his arm around her and she leaning into his

Chest as she looks up into his eyes and speaks these words:

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.” (6-7)

PP In these words we see **5 qualities of love that are in God-honoring Marriages**

PP 1-The security of love

“Set me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm;” Song of Solomon 8:6

Hebrew poetry is imprecise in its use of anatomical terms

The word ‘*arm*’ here may actually be better translated ‘*finger*’

The seal was a symbol of ownership, possession and affiliation

It was used to indicate ownership of one’s valuable possessions

PP Pharaoh took his own signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s finger and he took his gold chain and put it around Joseph’s neck in **Genesis 41:42**

Can you picture this couple on this romantic walk together with his arm around her, and her left arm around his waist

And she reaches for his chest and then reaches up to his hand encircling her shoulders and makes this appeal to him

She wanted him to love her in his heart as well as in his actions

When they were together and when they were apart

A seal was only to be broken open by the one to whom it was intended

The wife is saying to her husband, I am all yours, but only yours

All of me, is for you, exclusively

My emotions, my desire, my loyalty, my faithfulness, my body, all of who I am belongs to you

I want you to be secure in my love and I want you to give all of yourself to me

Place me like a seal over your heart, and on your arm

Don’t let anyone else break the seal of our love

Don’t flirt with any other woman, don’t let any other woman catch your eye

There are wedding vows that you speak, and there are marriage vows that you live

I do not take off my wedding ring

I want everyone who meets me to know that I have given my heart to my wife

I want to stress this morning this was a married couple, growing in their marriage

Going to a deeper level of intimacy, maturing in their love

This is God’s desire for our marriages, that they would deepen in love, grow stronger in security throughout the years they have together

Notice something with me from this text

She is asking him, appealing to him to place her like a seal over his heart and arm

Wives, are you that bold and that gentle?

Not demanding, not angry, not accusative, but in her vulnerability and within the folds of her husband’s love, she asks him to place her like a seal privately and publicly

Husbands, have you fostered that freedom in your wife that she would have the intimate audacity to say these words to you?

Knowing that you love her exclusively, knowing that you will eagerly do whatever you

can to have that seal, wanting and desiring this full commitment from your wife
This is a picture of a marriage so secure, that it allowed for vulnerability, encouraged full
surrender and guaranteed complete security
But theirs was also a picture of wisdom
I believe what she was saying to her husband on that romantic walk through the fields
and vineyards, the very place their love had begun to grow, was that love would
not automatically stay this strong.
They were wise, because marriage takes effort, it requires constant work
But if it is to be fully satisfying and God-honoring, our wives must feel secure in our love
That there is no other woman, real or imagined, in the flesh or in cyberspace, no other
hobby, no other passion that is greater and more of a priority than her

PP 2-The strength of love

She explains why she made the request of being a seal over his heart and arm
It's because *"love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave."*

This type of poetry is called synonymous parallelism
'Love' is paralleled by 'jealousy', 'strong' with 'fierce' and 'death' with 'grave'
What the wife is saying to her husband is that the power of their love is as strong as the
power of death
Meaning that love holds its victims under its sway in exactly the same way death does
Once smitten there is no escape
It is rightly one-way and irreversible
My love, says the wife, is permanent and unalterably powerful toward you

Look at what she says next: *'jealousy is fierce as the grave'*

PP 'Grave' is from the Hebrew word Sheol, and is sometimes characterized as a monster
with an insatiable appetite, with a wide-open throat or gaping jaws

This is the jealousy of healthy love

PP 'Jealousy' is the emotion of single-minded devotion, which when turned away from
self, produces an overpowering zeal to promote the glory of the person who is loved
For this wife, it was the single-minded passion that wanted nothing more than the welfare
of her husband

She was telling Solomon let me be a seal on you because I want nothing more than to
make you feel the most loved man in the world

No other will ever love you the way I do and will my whole life

Imagine what this kind of love can do in the life of a man

Instead of reminding him of his faults, criticizing him for his weaknesses, she burned
with a zeal to be a blessing for her husband

A love so inescapably strong that it rivaled the power of death

PP 3-The source of love

How can she and Solomon love like this?

What was their hope for this kind of love?

What is our hope for this kind of love in our marriages?

It is right in the middle of this poetic stanza that she gives the reason for the strength of her love

“Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord.”

If one was to translate this literally from the Hebrew, it would read, ***‘Her darts, are darts of fire, a flame of Yah’***

The image springs into our minds of Cupid with drawn bow firing the darts of love

But the confidence she has in the strength of her love is not found in her, which is ever prone to weakness

It is ***‘the very flame of the Lord.’***

How powerful this is

She loves him, not with the fickle love of a human being, but with the very love of God that has consumed her

PP “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Romans 5:5

The love of God, His own love, is being pouring into our hearts through the Holy Spirit

Understand what confidence this gives us

It is His constant, intense, burning, jealous love that will beat in our hearts and seal our love for one another

And it is available to us in great abundance only as we walk faithfully with Him

PP 4-The stamina of love

Illus When we were on the Adirondack mission trip several weeks ago, we found ourselves plagued by hornets. One of the staff of the mission came and poured gasoline on their nests in the ground and then lit them. Some of the fire got away from the main area and one of our people sprayed water from a hose on it and it would not go out. Despite the water, the gasoline saturated flames continued to burn

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.”

A moment earlier, the Shulammite spoke to her husband about the fire of her love, which now she says is unquenchable

It is a flame that will not go out

When I lead couples at their weddings through their vows, almost customarily there is a vow that says for better or for worse

It is the for worse that this wife has in mind

The words ‘waters’ and ‘floods’ are used in the Bible for times testing, calamity and Trials

No marriage is immune to these, floods and waters will come

This is seen in marriages where difficulty moves them together rather than apart

I know of a couple who lost their daughter to disease and that even began a slow

unraveling of their marriage to the point that they divorced
The Shulammite pledged to her husband that when the difficulties of life would come her
love for him would continue to burn
It is one thing to pledge undying love in the midst of a romantic bubble on your wedding
day and another to renew your vows after you've tasted difficulty
This wife was saying I know hard times are coming, but I will cling to God and His love
will be an undying and unquenchable spring in my heart for you

PP 5-The sacrifice of Love

"If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised."

How strange this sounds at first until you realize the beauty of what she has said
Solomon, my love is freely given to you
No amount of money could purchase the love I have for you and no amount of money
would be worth destroying our marriage
You have never had to earn it, you didn't have to buy it, and you never will

The moment love tries to be earned or bought, it is destroyed
It must be freely given

**PP "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down
our lives for the brothers." 1 John 3:1**

This is the core ingredient in the love Christ has for His church and it is the same in every
God-honoring marriage
And in the same way, no amount of money a career would offer is worth losing your
marriage
Hold tightly to the precious gift you have been given

Friends, it is time we put serious effort into our marriages
Coasting always means you're going downhill
It needs to begin for many of us here immediately
Some of the marriages in our church are dying on the vine
Some are full of life and joy and are great motivations to the rest
Wherever you are in your marriage, you will find encouragement and help from the Word
of God during this series

PP My aim in this series is that we will at its end be able to all say about our spouses:
***"This is my beloved and this is my friend"* Song of Songs 5:16**

Pray

Application-With your spouse, **draw a roadmap** of your marriage. Include your *starting point* (the state of your marriage right now), the *detours and road under construction spots* (obstacles keeping you from the marriage you want and heard today. Hint: avoid the

blame game!!), the *scenic views* (those times of joy in marriage) and *your destination* (the picture of the marriage that you want). Be as specific and creative as you can.

Then spend a date alone with no distractions and plan out how to start the journey toward a marriage that is supremely satisfying and God-honoring!