



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Jeremiah; Lamentations Sermon Series
Supports Session 4: Exclusive
Sermon Title: "Him Alone"
Passage: Jeremiah 12:1-13

Connection to Session 4

The Lord strengthens our exclusive commitment to Him and His covenant.

Introduction/Opening

Historically and presently many Jewish families begin and end their day with the *Shema*: "Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one (Hebrew *echad*). Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:4-5). The Christian Standard Bible has a footnote that indicates another translation for the Hebrew word *echad* as "alone."¹ While some have understood the *Shema* as a confession of the oneness of God, some argue that it constitutes an oath of loyalty.²

Jesus repeated this command to his listeners in Mark 12:29-31. This call to wholehearted commitment applies to believers today. He wants us to make an exclusive oath of loyalty to Him. Of course, He has abundant standing to make this claim. He alone is the Lord, worthy of all our exclusive faith and love. Exclusive commitment to Him is a challenge, and He knows it. He acts to strengthen our exclusive commitment to Him. This text explores these acts.

Outline

1. **The Lord Grows our Resilience (Jer. 12:1-6).**
 - a. James Leo Green wrote, "The trials of human pilgrimage tend, in the providence of God, to be graduated—the footmen before the horses, the land of peace before the jungle of Jordan. The lesser trials are intended to prepare us for the greater. . . . If we move with Him, we will become stronger in character and service."³
 - b. Resilience is seen in how we respond to life. A husband and wife responded differently to the loss of a son in a motorcycle accident. For years after the burial, the father saw his son in fields around town or at familiar haunts in the area. The mother, however, came to terms and peace with the loss. The difference was that for the father the loss of his son was his first loss of someone close to him to death. For the mother, however, the loss of her son followed the loss of her mother during her childhood, her father as a young woman, and others before she lost her son. Other deaths built her resilience before the death of her son.

- c. The Lord knows how to build our resilience. Setbacks, disappointments, and heartaches prepare us for future challenges to our exclusive commitment to the Lord. When we run into these, we need to trust that the Lord has built us for that hour.

2. The Lord Grieves our Rejection (Jer. 12:7-13).

- a. Notice the personal nature of the loss. The use of “My” emphasizes how personal this was to Him and how precious Judah was to Him—*my* hours, *my* inheritance (three times), *my* life, *my* vineyard, *my* plot of land, *my* desirable plot. It breaks the heart of the sensitive reader to read the Lord’s lament, “My inheritance has behaved toward *me* like a lion in the forest. She has roared at *me*” (v. 8, emphasis added). Philip Graham Ryken wrote, “These are not angry words; they are the words of a wounded lover.”⁴ Judah hurt the Lord deeply. He grieved in Jeremiah’s hearing.
- b. When we compromise our exclusive commitment to the Lord, we wound the heart of God like adulterers and adulteresses wound their husbands and wives. James minced no words on this when he wrote, “You adulterous people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So, whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4).

3. The Lord Gathers our Rivals (Jer. 12:14-17).

- a. One moment, the Lord mourned Judah’s betrayal and threatened Gentile invasion. The next, He offered Gentile nations grace. The Lord offered this to them if they would “diligently learn the ways of my people” (v. 16). He promised Gentile nations the departure of Judah from their lands, compassion, and “they will be built up among my people” (vv. 14-16). The Lord promised to gather the Gentiles with Judah in His grace. Ephesians 2:11-22 provides a New Testament commentary on this promise.
- b. The people who challenge our exclusive commitment need to meet the Lord in an exclusive commitment. Could it be that the Lord has planted us among them to model an exclusive commitment? Could it be that if we flinch that we will offend them and miss our opportunity to win them to the Lord? We are not the only ones who need our exclusive commitment. *They need our exclusive commitment.*

Conclusion

We must wrestle with the reality of God alone. Resisting Jesus or putting off a decision to follow Him leads to confusion and darkness. We may know that we need to act, yet we continue to resist. We live in confusion, darkness, and a state of forsakenness. We may look okay on the outside, but our inner world is a burned waste land. After believing in Jesus, we may wonder why we chose a life lived in rebellion against the Lord. We may not only follow his beauty and worthiness; but also follow Him because of the forsakenness, darkness, and lovelessness of a life without Him. We are exclusively committed to Him both because we want to be and because we need to be.

¹Cf. *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), in loco.

²Lois Tverberg, *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewish Words of Jesus Can Change Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 39.

³James Leo Green, *Jeremiah*, in Broadman Bible Commentary vol 6 (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 82.

⁴Philip Graham Ryken, [*Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Sorrow to Hope*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 224.

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