



Jeremiah 4:28-31
“Anything But God”

28 For this shall the earth mourn, And the heavens above be black, Because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, Nor will I turn back from it.

29 The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up on the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, And not a man shall dwell in it.

30 "And when you are plundered, What will you do? Though you clothe yourself with crimson, Though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, Though you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you will make yourself fair; Your lovers will despise you; They will seek your life.

31 "For I have heard a voice as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of her who brings forth her first child, The voice of the daughter of Zion bewailing herself; She spreads her hands, saying, 'Woe is me now, for my soul is weary Because of murderers!'

A chaplain friend of mine recently remarked that he’s seeing a marked increase in the number of soldiers who come to him asking for “counseling without religion.” He says he tells them “you must have gotten turned round on the way to the psychologist’s office!” But what he’s seeing isn’t just something that’s happening in the military, it’s happening throughout our society. Our culture is disintegrating, and we are increasingly desperate for solutions, as long as the solutions don’t include God.

I call this the “Anything But God” or ABG syndrome. And you see it all over the place, for instance scientists now know that evolution simply cannot account for the incredible complexity of cells, it cannot explain where all the information contained within the DNA Helix came from and yet they are more willing to theorize the aliens from other planets might have introduced cells into the primordial oceans than that God created life. Any explanation, I mean any explanation is preferable to “**in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**”

Sadly this ABG syndrome isn’t new, far from it, it’s been around the fall of man. Since that initial rebellion, our fallen hearts have inclined us to shake our fist at God, to deny Him, to run from Him and to choose anything over Him. Paul wrote about it in Romans 1:18-23

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

*22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,
23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man -- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*

Viewed objectively, it's utterly crazy – given the choice between an All Good, All Wise, and All powerful Creator and heaps of worthless idols that cannot help us, and which frequently destroy us, our natural inclination is to choose the idols every single time.

That is unfortunately what the nation of Judah had been doing for hundreds of years, and that in spite of God relentlessly pursuing them like the hound of heaven, sending them prophet after prophet to plead with them to turn aside, warning them what would happen if they didn't cease their endless rebellion and spiritual adultery.

In the preceding verses we had seen a chilling prophecy of what was going to the nation if they didn't repent. How it would be utterly laid waste by the Babylonians. The destruction would be so terrible, that the very earth itself would mourn, and the sun would be blotted out, perhaps not wishing to illuminate so terrible a scene. And yet still they will not turn away from their idols and flee back to God. So the Lord is now saying what I have warned would happen will now come to pass, and He will not change His mind. To reinforce that fact He says **“I have spoken”** –

When the true prophets of God came and spoke to the people of Judah, they despised them. What they had to say didn't agree at all with what the people believed, so they said “that's just your opinion”, or that Jeremiah he's a raving lunatic, a fundamentalist, an extremist. That can't be what God is saying. My god is a god of love, or at least he's a god who loves me, and he would never threaten me with judgment! But now as Calvin put it, God is saying to them **“My servants have been despised by you; but they have said nothing but what I have commanded them: I am therefore the author of that sentence by which you ought to have been moved and roused.”** As Peter later put it in 2 Peter 1:21 **“for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”**

The ironic thing is Jeremiah said what he said not because he wanted to, but because God wanted him to, in fact Jeremiah didn't want to deliver this message to them and the idea that his own people were about to be destroyed horrified him, so he warned them with tears and with great sorrow.

He warns them here that when the Babylonians come, all of their cities, fortified or not will fall, the people will try to hide in thickets and in rocks, but even after disaster has come they will still seek relief in Anything but God

Judah, the faithless wife had rejected God her faithful husband, and had been trying for decades to find lover amongst the nations who would take care of her. But none of them loved her, they only sought to use her for their own purposes. They Loved Judah like a cat loves a mouse.

She would go to the Egyptians and say please protect us from the Assyrians, and then she would go to the Assyrians and say protect us from the Egyptians, and then to the Babylonians saying protect us from the Assyrians and then back to the Egyptians saying protect from the Babylonians. And even though Hezekiah had demonstrated that only God could protect them from the nations, she refused to consider returning to Him with their whole heart. never worked kept trying to make alliances. She has

rejected her husband and spent her time running from lover to lover, looking for someone who would protect her, none would.

And now she was going to try it again, she would put on her red dress, and her jewelery and her make up and try what had failed yet again. And this time it will be fatal. We are reminded of Queen Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:30. She had spent her entire life fighting against God and His People and pursuing her false God Baal, now when Jehu is on his way to kill her we read *“Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window.”* But he’s not taken in, and she ends up being thrown out the window by her own servants. Similarly the Babylonians are not going to be taken in again either, they were on their way because Judah had broken their promise to serve them. And none of the other nations can help.

There is nothing more lamentable than someone entirely at the mercy of someone who has no pity, with no one to help them, and that is the condition Judah will be in. But they will be in it because they refused to return to God, the only one who could help them. And so, Jeremiah prophetically hears the voice of Judah crying out as a woman having her first child, she is full of self-pity but there is no one who will help. She makes this ironic **statement 'Woe is me now, for my soul is weary Because of murderers!'** obviously referring to the nations. But who is the real murderer? If anyone is to blame for the destruction of Judah, it would be Judah. They brought this entirely on themselves. No one else is responsible.

Applications:

First, don’t fall into the same pit that Judah by ignoring the warnings that God gives through his messengers. Judah ignored those warnings because they didn’t fit with their desires, their view of the way things should be, but the warnings of prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah were in perfect keeping with what Moses had already told them would happen if they pursued false gods. Let me ask you have you ever heard anything from the pulpit or in counseling, that reflected God’s word but went against what you wanted so you ignored it.

Worse, are there parts of God’s word you won’t listen to because they go against what you want? This very year in this town a church held a congregational meeting to remove their pastor because he refused to allow the ordination of women. For whatever reason, the pastor didn’t see the confrontation coming, but at the meeting he attempted to explain from God’s word why women shouldn’t be in the leadership of the church. Eventually one of the women leading the effort stood up and said, *“I don’t think you understand, our spirit doesn’t agree with those passages you are reading from.”* In other words, it may be in the bible, but we don’t agree with it, so it can’t be God’s word. Never put yourself in that position.

Secondly, let me ask you, are you suffering from the Anything But God syndrome? There are many ways that you can do that. You remember we discussed those soldiers that were looking for any solution to their problems as long as it didn’t involve God, if you are doing that you are suffering for that syndrome. But your biggest problem is not a messed up life, your biggest problem is that you are sinner and that the wages of sin is death and that if you die in your sins you will go to Hell forever. Your biggest problem is your need of salvation, and you are suffering from the ABG syndrome if you are thinking that you can be saved by anything other than faith alone in Christ.

Far too often when the gospel is preached and salvation is offered as a gift to be received by believing in Christ, that is the last thing that people want. There has to be some work that they can do in order to be saved, some other way. But God's has said in His word, that there isn't. When the Apostles were asked by the Phillipian Jailer "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They did not say, try to live a good life, meditate daily, or do good works, they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Thirdly, and this is a hard lesson, what made Judah's suffering most terrible was the fact that it did not bring them to repent and flee to Christ. They continued on in their futile rebellion until they had drunk down the cup of wrath to the bottom. Believe it or not, suffering can be a mercy IF it causes us to leave our idols, to repent and flee to Christ, and sometimes it is suffering that God uses to do that. The death of a loved one, an illness or injury, or some Job-like catastrophe.

Psalm 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

As the wicked are hurt by the best things, so the godly are bettered by the worst.- WILLIAM JENKYN

PRAYER Grant, Almighty God, that though we are torpid in our vices, we may yet be attentive to these examples of thy wrath, by which thou designest to warn us, so that we may learn by the misery of others to fear thee: and may we be also attentive to those threatenings, by which thou drawest us to thee, as thou failest to allure us by thy kindness: and may we, in the meantime, feel assured that thou wilt ever be propitious and merciful to all miserable sinners, who will from the heart seek thee and sincerely and unfeignedly repent; so that we may contend with our vices, and with real effort strive to deliver ourselves from those snares of Satan which he ever spreads for us, in order that we may more freely devote ourselves altogether to thee, and take such delight in thy righteousness, that our object and aim through the whole course of our life may be to please thee, and to render our services approved in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Amen (Calvin)