

Knowing God from Habakkuk
Walter Beuttler

[Comments: 1) All scriptures are from the KJV except where noted. 2) This message has been transcribed word for word (from Beuttler's own teachings) as accurately as possible (due to the quality of the recording). 3) Beuttler had his own dictionary of favorite words he used throughout his messages, and they have been transcribed and spelled out accordingly. 4) Spelling on certain proper names, airports, hotels, locations, etc. may not be exact. 5) Messages were spoken late 1960's, early 1970's. 6) Beuttler was a Bible teacher at NBI (a.k.a. EBI, Eastern Bible Institute) for 32 years traveling worldwide since early 1950's until a year before he went to be with the Lord in 1974.]

I am very pleased to be here with you. Our brother has referred to the fact that I'm from the Assemblies of God and that is the truth. For 32 years I've been teaching in one of their colleges. Incidentally, if any of my former students are here, I'd love to say "Hi." Some of them have put on weight and changed so that I do not recognize them any more without identification.

When I walked in here, I was so pleased with your elegant looking drapes. (Laughter) I have special reason. Following last April or March, I was ministering to the Indonesian pastors for a brief seminar on the island of Samoa in record heat, high humidity and very poor living conditions. Only a week later in Bangkok, Thailand, I had a breakdown and only yesterday did I feel I had to go to the hospital. But I told them I had to come down here. I couldn't let you people down for the hospital, could I? (Clapping)

I'll only have approximately 35 minutes. I'll do the best I can. For those of you who expect to come to the services, I would like to mention that we are going through a series on the personal knowledge of God, not merely knowledge about God, but the knowledge of God-knowing God in personal experience. I'll be sharing things with you that will strain your credibility by way of experiences in the area of the knowledge of God. If you will follow through with me, you will find that you will have a new appreciation of God, a relationship with God. In fact, I would say that if your heart is earnest, and you bring your heart, that many of you will get a new direction, and find a new dimension in your Christian experience. That is not an overstatement.

Now I teach these things all over the world every year and I know precisely what I say when I'm saying these things. For this morning within the time limit, I'm going to take you to one of the key problems and key solutions to problems, which many people have in their heart, questions that have never been answered, solutions that have never been found. We're going to try and find those things in the Word this morning. Time is against us, but I'll manage to convey the essence to your heart at least.

I'm taking you to Habakkuk 1:1, "*The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.*" The last statement of the last verse of the last chapter in the Book of Habakkuk, "*To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.*"

Now I'm going to speak very concisely, very succinctly, so follow me closely because of the limitation of time. I have to boil things down without boiling them up.

This is a strange text, yet it is full of meaning, especially for those of God's people who have gone, or are going, through deep waters, they carry problems they cannot understand, questionings that find no answer but an empty echo of another question. We're going to try and find what God has to say on that.

Notice here in the beginning the prophet is burdened. In fact, we have here the perplexed prophet. This man of God was very perplexed. This morning we have a word for those who are perplexed irrespective of the nature of their perplexity. In the beginning the prophet is burdened. He is heavy. He is wondering. He carries a weight on his shoulders, so to speak. Even so, at the end of the book the man is singing. In the beginning, he has a burden. In the end, he has a song. In between these two extremes, we have God's solution of changing our burdens into a song. Can you follow me? It's God's solution of turning our burdens into a song.

In this book we have three verses with three words that constitute what in Bible school we call key words to the book. These three key words represent three different problems, which constitute the burden, the weight, the heaviness under which this prophet is laboring. One is found in 1:2:

“O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!” Habakkuk 1:2

How long? Have you ever asked the Lord, *“Lord, how long till You come and heal me? How long till my boy comes back home from his wondering ways? How long until my girl, my daughter comes to her senses and turns around and comes back to the ways of the Lord?”* How long? There are so many different kinds of how longs. *“How long do I have to put up with that man of mine till he gets saved?”* There are wives like that. *“How long do I have to put up with this creature? How long do I have to take those insults? Lord, how long until You bring that man to the altar?”* Whatever questions you have, you get the principle idea.

In verse 3 of the same chapter, there is another question, why?

“Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me; and there are that raise up strife and contention.”

Habakkuk 1:3

What bothered Habakkuk was the iniquity that abounded in those days without apparent interference or even interest by God. *“God, why don't You clean up Watergate? Why do You let crime go on?”*

A lady said to me, *“Brother Beuttler, why does God let the devil live?”*

That answer is easy so I said, "*Because He needs him for you.*" She didn't ask another question. (Laughter)

Why? How many people carry a why in their heart? "*Why Lord?*" Only this morning I was thinking a why of my own.

Some years ago I was going to Tokyo from the Los Angeles Airport. I picked up my suitcase. It was very heavy. A boy sat in front of it. I didn't want to bother him so I bent over him and lifted my case up over him. As I did, I got something in my back that I'm in constant pain to this very time that I'm speaking to you. Nobody knows what to do with it. I've had trouble ever since. All I tried to do is to be nice to the boy and not change him. I should have picked it up like this; instead I bent way over him. You remember that when you pick up things. Why? There are worse whys than that.

"Why did my boy not come back from Vietnam?" My brother in Germany was killed in Moscow during the war. My Mother never got over it. "*Why did it have to be my boy? Why did it have to happen to us?"*

My sister contracted polio before she was born. She's 64, five years younger than I. All these years that girl has been a cripple. Today she's in a state place because it's too expensive for anyone to keep her. She never complains, but she said to me, "*Walter, do you have an answer? Why did it have to be me to contract polio before I was even born?"* What are you going to think? "*Why did it have to happen to us?"*

Some years ago, I was teaching in the Commonwealth Bible College in Brisbane, Australia. I get there quite often. We had the students there at night. We all went down to the Central Assembly. The students went as they could. One came down on a motorcycle. Then they all went back to the college for the night. During the night I heard noises at the principal's house where I was staying and peeked out of the door about 2:00 o'clock thereabouts.

I saw the Australian State Police and asked, "*Sir, is anything wrong?"*

He said, "*Yes, one of the students got killed on the way home from church.*" He went downtown to hear Brother Beuttler speak. On the way home he cut it too short around a corner and got killed. Why?

I had a camp meeting in Melbourne, Australia. A man drove for quite a distance to hear Brother Beuttler speak. He had an automobile accident and got killed. You begin to wonder what's wrong with you.

We had a student in Bible College where I was teaching. He was there because I was teaching. He got killed. Don't stay home tonight now! (Laughter) I had nothing to do with it, but why? People ask, "*Why did it have to be me? Why did I have to do this set of things as a result of which that happened?"* What are you going to say? We'll see what God says.

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity; wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” Habakkuk 1:13

The essence here is, *“Lord, why do You permit the wicked treatment of the righteous at the hands of the wicked?”*

During the last war we had a pastor of a large church in Philadelphia who went to the rationing board for oil. He applied for 500 gallons of oil for the winter to heat his house. They gave him 250 gallons. The man said, *“Gentlemen, I need 500 gallons.”*

They said, *“You get 250 gallons. We assume that everyone who comes in here is a liar and asks for twice as much as they really need.”*

He said, *“I’m the pastor of such and such a church. I don’t lie.”*

He was told, *“If you don’t lie, that’s your hard luck. You get 250 gallons like everybody else.”*

“Lord, why do You permit the unrighteous treatment of Your people at the hands of the wicked without doing anything about it?” I’m condensing this, but you get the message. So here you have this man perplexed, troubled with *“how long?”* There are a thousand and one how longs in people’s hearts. I get all over the world every year and talk with people. Wherever it is, people have problems for which they are struggling for an answer, and there isn’t one, except with Him.

“Wherefore?” Now look what this man did with his problem. You see, we are influenced by the age in which we live. We want everything instant. This is generalizing, but you understand. We want instant prosperity. We want instant health by popping all kinds of pills by the hundreds. We want instant security. We want instant coffee, instant tea, instant joy and everything instant by the push button. God has not changed His ways to our push-button age. God is still adhering to the principles in His Word. God is not hurrying.

When I was in school, I used to get phone calls, *“Brother Beuttler, I have a problem. Something’s wrong with my head. Will you ask the Lord what’s wrong with it?”*

I asked, *“Well, have you asked yourself?”*

The answer, *“I haven’t got the time. That’s why I’m calling you.”* They want instant!

I got a request from a lady, *“Brother Beuttler, will you ask the Lord whether it’s all right for me to shave the hair on my legs.”* (Laughter) Instant! Do you think I prayed? I did not. I’m not in the hair shaving business. (Laughter) They can’t be bothered praying, so

they bother the preacher. Folks, the average Christian today is just too lazy to take their problem to God. They'd rather pick up the telephone, "*What do you think?*"

"I don't agree with that."

To another they ask, "*What do you think?*"

"Oh! Uh! I know whose got you."

They ask another, "*What do you think?*"

"Really, do you really think so? Uh." They usually don't want answers. They want confirmation. Sooner or later, one fool will always find a bigger fool to agree with him. (Clapping & laughter) People shop around for confirmation rather than find real solutions. In chapter 2, this man said:

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." Habakkuk 2:1

This man expected to be reproved. He said, "*I'll set me upon the tower and watch to see what he will say.*" In other words, this man took his "*how longs,*" his "*whys*" and his "*wherefores*" to God. He didn't call up every Tom, Dick and Harry in the hope of finding somebody to agree with him. He went to God and said, "*I'm going to stay.*" We don't stay long enough before God. We're hardly on our knees two minutes when we're ready for a coke or a hoagie-or whatever you call them here. He said, "*I'll stay put.*"

You know I often used to wonder about these towers in the Bible. One year I was asked to speak at the chapel of the different consulate officials in the city of Damascus. While there, one of the men took me around on Monday. To my amazement, here were these towers of the Bible. I would say I could see about six at any given time from any place. I took good note of them.

They had a room at the top about 18 feet high. The owner of a field could go up there in blessed isolation. He could sleep or watch his fields against robbers or the like. Apparently this man Habakkuk went up to one of those towers and shut himself up and waited until he had an answer from God. For those of you who are interested, by way of parenthesis, the street called Straight is still there. You've read about the street called Straight in Acts. It's a long street, as straight as straight can be. They call it Straight Street. The very same street mentioned in Acts is still there. Now then, Habakkuk went to God.

I've shut myself up in a hotel already for a week in fasting and prayer. In fact, I've done it several times. We need to take our problem to God and stick with it until we get an answer. In the same chapter, God gives him an answer.

"The just shall live by faith." Habakkuk 2:4

This is the heart of it. *“The just shall live by faith in the faithfulness of God.”* That’s the way it is in the Hebrew. To boil it down, God answered this man. God still answers, but God’s answer is not necessarily the answer to our question, for the answer to our question is not necessarily the answer to our need which underlies the question.

God did not say, *“Well Habakkuk, it will be 2 ½ more years.”* That would not have answered his problem. So God did not answer his question, but God answered the *“need”* which was underlying his question. God was saying, *“The just shall live by faith in the faithfulness of God.”* In other words, *“Habakkuk, never mind your how long. Don’t ask anymore why. Don’t ask anymore wherefore. That will not answer your problem. It might answer your question, but not the problem.”*

The true problem here lies in lifting our eyes up and beholding God, as it were, in His unimpeachable character, having a confidence in the faithfulness of God, in the veracity of His Word, in the impeccable, unimpeachable character of God in spite of what He does or doesn’t do. So the person no longer asks, *“Why did You,”* or *“Why didn’t You.”* But you can lift up your faith in the character of God and say like one of old, *“Shall not the judge of all the earth do right.”*

God knows what He’s doing. God knows why He permits. God is absolutely righteous. There is no fault in Him. This faith says, *“I will no longer ask questions. I will believe in the unimpeachable integrity of Almighty God, and for grace to sustain me in spite of my whys, wherefores and how longs.”*

When I had this attack in Bangkok, Thailand just a few months back, Mrs. Beuttler was with me. I was gasping for breath. She told the Lord, *“Lord, I’m afraid our boat is sinking.”* I was gasping for breath and it looked like the end. She can testify that I wouldn’t question God.

I’d say, *“God lives.”* Gasp, gasp! *“God’s good.”* Gasp, gasp! Whew! Affirming the character and unfailing faithfulness of God in spite of the fact that it looked like I was going to perish there in that hotel room in a strange country in a strange land knowing nobody. *“The just shall live by faith in the faithfulness of God.”*

I’ve not treated this fully for lack of time, but I’m over the time and must close now. But trust me, you get the essence. You ask, *“Why.”* Never mind why. God is good. *“Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?”* Habakkuk got the answer.

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.” Habakkuk 3:17-19

“Neither shall fruit be in the vines.” In other words, even though the apples and pears are falling to the ground prematurely. *“And the fields shall yield no meat.”* And there shall be no steak in the refrigerator and no meat in the A&P. The cows are all killed off and all there is no more, *“there shall be no herd in the stall.”* They’re ate up! We might as well bring it up to date. This is the updated version.

“To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.” What you have here is this: this man is now turning from his burden and questioning to the place of victory through faith, triumph through faith. He triumphed over all his questions without their answer because his faith is no longer in what God does or why He does it, but because his faith is in what God IS in spite of what He does or doesn’t do.

So he has entered the rest of faith, the joy of faith, the strength of faith, the walk of faith, the song of faith. The man is now singing. Nothing has been changed. He has been changed. His attitude is changed. Now the man sings. In the beginning, he was troubled, burdened, weighed down crying, *“How long?” “Why?” “I can’t understand it.” “Wherefore do You?”* He asks no more.

“To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.” He takes this song, hands it to the choir and the choir leader and says, *“Come on Suzy, let’s sing the song of faith in the character of God in spite of what He does or doesn’t do.”* Friends, that is God’s solution, the true solution to our how longs, to our whys and to our wherefores.

I think I’ve done a poor job because I was pressed for time, but I trust you got the point. God bless you.