

When God Cannot Be Explained
Habakkuk 3:17-19, Romans 8:28-29

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We need to understand one fundamental truth that's inherent throughout all of scripture: God never explains Himself. He rarely gives reasons.

The events that unfold in our world seldom make sense. Therefore, we're confronted with the basic tenant of Christianity: The righteous live by faith.

On Saturday, March 9, 2002, three women, two in their 20s and one in her 30s, were killed in Chicago, when part of a 25-foot aluminum scaffold fell because of high winds from the 43rd floor of the John Hancock Center.

These three women were in their cars unsuspecting any danger, when the incident occurred. The Sunday Chicago Tribune headline stated, *"Tragedy at the Hancock."*

This tragedy occurred almost six months from the day terrorists flew planes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing over 3,000 innocent people.

Tragedy is hard to understand, hard to explain, and hard on faith. Some people lay the blame for all that happens at the feet of God and become bitter and cynical.

They ask for an explanation and get silence. They ask for understanding but are baffled. Life, indeed, is a mystery. Much of what happens in life is beyond us.

We don't understand why some people have cancer; why some people are involved in tragic accidents; why some people suffer premature heart attacks; why some people live in constant pain, while others live relatively trouble-free lives.

And even if it were explained to us, we probably wouldn't be satisfied with the answer. We long for sensibility. We seek explanation. We're desperate for reason.

That's why we need to understand this one fundamental truth that's inherent throughout all of scripture: God never explains Himself.

He rarely gives reasons and the events that unfold in our world seldom make sense. That's why we're confronted with that basic tenant of Christianity: The righteous live by faith.

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Perhaps the greatest expression of undaunted faith ever penned came from the Old Testament spokesman, Habakkuk. Most prophets spoke to the people for God. Habakkuk spoke to God for the people.

He lived in a time that was hard on faith. He saw the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper.

Which caused him to ask God two questions we often ask: "Why?" and "How long?" Why were these things happening? How long would it be before they're rectified?

God revealed to Habakkuk that the Babylonians, the epitome of everything Habakkuk detested, would be used as an instrument of judgment on the Hebrew people.

Habakkuk didn't understand and he couldn't explain it. For a time, evil would win over righteousness and bad things would happen to good people. God's hand would not move; His face would not be seen.

Yet, throughout this time of illogical and unexplainable punishment, God reminded Habakkuk that *“The righteous will live by his faith.”* (Habakkuk 2:4).

Habakkuk realized that, though he didn’t understand the ways of God and didn’t agree with the timing of God, he couldn’t question the wisdom, love, or reliability of God.

Habakkuk verbalized his faith when he wrote chapter 3, verses 17-19, *“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.”*

Habakkuk affirmed that even if everything he relied on failed, if everything that gave stability to his life crumbled, he’d still trust the Lord.

If Habakkuk were speaking today, he’d say, *“Though the scaffold falls, the stock market crashes, the company goes bankrupt, and the economy heads south, if everything I rely on falters—I will trust in the Lord. My confidence in God will never waiver.”*

Corrie ten Boom knew about tragedy and suffering, yet she lived with courageous faith. Upon emerging from a Nazi concentration camp, she said, *“There is no pit so deep that God isn’t deeper still.”*

She picked an apt analogy because pain and tragedy are a pit; for some, it appears bottomless. Many experience a falling, disorientation, and terror, as they grab for walls that are out of reach.

They see only blackness and hear only echoes of the life they used to know. Many claim that God’s not present.

But Corrie ten Boom, like Habakkuk, reminds us that even in the pits of tragedy, God's still there. He's present. Yes, pain's real but God's real, too.

That's where faith comes in. Faith reminds us that there's a design for our lives that presently we may not fully grasp, but in the interval of time, between illogic and logic, between misunderstanding and understanding, between questions and answers, we must believe in God's love.

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That's why faith believes that God's too wise to make a mistake. God has a plan for our lives and He's busy weaving it in His own time. But it's not always easy to discern since it's often beyond us.

We view life as though we're watching a parade through a rolled-up magazine. We can only see what's immediately in front of us.

But God's high above us and sees all of life at one glance. He sees both the beginning and the end of things, while we only see the present.

Yet, we're always wiser after the event. While the crisis is occurring, we're unaware of why we're going through such a tragedy. Only after we reflect upon it, does it strike us that God was in it all along.

For that reason, we must trust in the ways of God, believing that He's too wise to make a mistake. On the wall of a concentration camp, a prisoner had carved these words:

*I believe in the sun, even though it does not shine.
I believe in love, even when it isn't shown.
I believe in God, even when He doesn't speak.*

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Next, faith believes that God's too kind to be cruel.

Over the marble fireplace in the Mathematics Building of Princeton University, written in original German, is the scientific credo, "*God is subtle, but He is not malicious.*"

God is never malicious in His dealing with us. Whatever He does, He does for our good.

In Romans 8:28-29, Paul spoke of the kindness of God and His amazing grace, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*"

These verses are as important for what they don't say as they are for what they do say.

They don't say that everything that happens is good—it isn't. They don't say that God causes everything that happens—He doesn't. They don't say that everything will turn out okay for everyone—it won't.

What they do say is this: God's at work in the world, especially in the lives of His children. His glorious purpose is to make us like His Son, Jesus Christ.

And to that good end, God can and does use all things, the good and the bad; that which He causes and that which He permits.

It assures us that no experience has to be a total waste. If we give it to God, He'll take that experience and bring something good out of it.

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Faith also believes that God always knows best and does the best in His own time. When we try to impose our timetable on God, we get into trouble.

For example, a man found a cocoon on a tree in his yard. He was intrigued by it and decided to watch it change.

One day, he saw a tiny butterfly inside the delicate covering struggling, trying its best to break out of its captivity.

Finally, the man became so frustrated that he decided to use a razor blade to make a tiny slit in the side of the cocoon in order to free the struggling butterfly.

Soon afterward, the butterfly was free, but it couldn't fly and finally died prematurely.

There are times in trials when we want to short circuit the maturation process. We want to quit while God wants to prepare us for a great work or a new phase of life.

Like the butterfly, it's only in struggles that we obtain strength.

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Following that, faith believes that God's in control, and therefore, we can rest easily, if we so choose.

George Buttrick said, "*The same sun that hardens the clay melts the wax.*" It's our choice whether we let the inevitable suffering and misfortune of life harden or soften us.

We can choose to be hopeful or hopeless. We can decide whether we'll be an optimist or a pessimist. It all depends on how we look at it and how we determine in which direction we look.

Lastly faith believes that when we can't trace the hand of God, we must trust the heart of God.

In Chapter 3 verse 19, Habakkuk presented a great affirmation of faith by saying, *"The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights."*

The deer Habakkuk was referring to was a mountain climbing deer known for its sure and steady feet. On the most treacherous terrain, it never fell.

This is the Lord's promise to us. He'll keep us on our feet as we travel the treacherous paths of life. He may not get us out of the troubles, but He promises to get us through it.

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Conclusion

God's here for you. He'll never leave you. Never. He cares too much for you.

Even if the night's dark and the storm's raging, know that God's here. Even when you can't see the hand of God, you can trust the heart of God.

Even if you don't understand why, trust Him. Trust Him because you know that He knows why.

Even if you wonder how long, trust Him because He knows the time and the length of suffering. Trust Him without explanation, logic and reasoning. Trust Him because He is God.