

## Prayer That Transforms Habakkuk 3:1-19

**Intro: Play Video clip 1** Prayer is our connection to God; we are looking at prayer – so far we have looked at the prayer that makes us into *Difference Makers*, two weeks ago we looked at prayer that **Calls Down the Fire of God – Gods power**, today we are going to look at the kind of **Prayer That Transforms Us**.

Dr. D. James Kennedy has a weekly radio broadcast called *Truths that Transform*. It is a biblically based program that weekly provides thoughtful discussions about religious liberty, marriage and family, and the state of education in our nation, it also tackles hard topics such as cults, sexuality, and evidence for God - offering practical and Biblical solutions that can turn the tide.

The idea behind the name is that if we believe the truths he teaches that it will transform your life. Today we are going to look at a prayer that will transform your life.

In our text today we are going to look at a prophet who transforms in his entire attitude toward God in 3 short chapters.

### [Read Habakkuk 3:1-19/Pray/dismiss Jr. Church]

Habakkuk is an example of the power of prayer in changing our hearts and our attitudes. The Book opens with a very unhappy prophet upset and even mad at God. He accuses God of really not doing his job. The prophet believes that God needs to judge and deal with the evil that was present in Judah. So he complains to God and asks “*Lord, How Long?*” (1:2) In other words come on “*God do something!*” “*Do your job because sin is out of control in around here!*” God replies to our unhappy prophet with the answer that he is going to send the even more evil nation of the Babylonians to deal with Judah’s sin. Well once again our prophet gets an attitude with God because he doesn’t like God’s answer to his prayer. He believes God is making a mistake sending an evil nation to judge righteous Judah. He in essence says, “*Hello God! You don’t use evil to do good!*”, “*You’re a holy God you cannot do this to a nation that is more righteous than these barbarians. Come on God this is just wrong!*”

It then appears that our prophet must have cried out right after God’s reply to his first complaint and then there is a pause, a time of silence from God to our prophet about this second complaint. In 2:1 our prophet says in essence, “*I will just stand here and wait on Your answer; just wait to hear what do you have to say about that?*” Well God does not answer right away instead He chooses to wait. Our prophet has to endure a time of silence. When God does decide to answer the prophet He chooses not to answer the questions of Habakkuk. Instead he tells Habakkuk that He will judge sin and the righteous will live by faith (2:4b). In other words He says, “*Habakkuk I know what I am doing and you need to trust the path that I have chosen to restore this nation to me.*” This is not the answer our prophet wanted to here I am sure. That brings us to Chapter three in our story of the unhappy prophet of God. We enter into chapter three with a noticeable difference in the tone and the attitude of our prophet as he prays to God after his second complaint is responded to by God. C.S. Lewis says of prayer, “*...prayer doesn’t change God-it changes him.*” Real prayer, prayer that has the most impact on us and the world around us is **Prayer That Transforms us**.

### **What does it take for a Prayer to Transform us?**

#### **Prayer transforms us when...**

#### **1. We Pray for God’s Work to be Revived (Vv. 1-2)**

##### **A. Revival happens when we hear God’s voice, He said**

##### **1) Because, “I have heard thy [God] speech”**

(a) The word “speech” means “report” and refers to what God had told the prophet earlier (Hab. 2:2-3).

(1) When we understand the will of God, we should be motivated to pray “**Thy will be done.**”

(2) The same God who ordains the end also ordains the means to the end, and prayer is an important part of that means.

(b) Hearing God’s Word generates faith in the heart of the child of God

- (1) Rom. 10:17 says **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”**
- (2) The Word of God and prayer must always go together (Acts 6:4; John 15:7) or else our praying become zeal without knowledge.
- (3) *“I used to think I should close my Bible and pray for faith,”* said D.L. Moody, *“but I came to see that it was in studying the Word that I was to get faith.”*

**B. Revival happens when we become overwhelmed by God’s splendor.**

- 1) In Verse 2 he had seen a vision of the greatness of God,
  - (a) Recorded for us in verses 3-15,
  - (b) This vision left him weak and helpless (v. 16).
  - (c) All he could do was cry out to God
- 2) Many people have the idea that it’s always an enjoyable experience getting to know God in a deeper way, but that’s not what the saints of God in the Bible would say.
  - (a) Moses trembled at Mt. Sinai when God gave the law (Heb. 12:18-21).
  - (b) Joshua fell on his face before the Lord (Josh. 5:13-15) and so did David (1 Chron. 21:16).
  - (c) Daniel became exhausted and ill after seeing the visions God gave him (Dan. 8:27; 10:11), and the vision of Christ’s glory on the Mount of Transfiguration left Peter, James, and John facedown on the ground and filled with terror (Matt 17:6).
  - (d) When John saw the glorified Christ, he fell at His feet as though dead (Rev. 1:17).
- 3) A. W. Tozer says: *“To know God is at once the easiest and the most difficult thing in the world.”*
  - (a) God certainly has the ability to reveal Himself to us, for He can do anything, but it’s a problem for God to find somebody who is ready to meet Him.
  - (b) God doesn’t reveal Himself to superficial saints who are only looking for *“a new experience”* they can brag about, or to curious Christians who want to *“sample”* deeper fellowship with God but not at too great a price.
- 4) *We* are the ones who make it difficult to get to know God better.
  - (a) James says, **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you”** (James 4:8).
  - (b) **“But on this one will I look,”** says the Lord, **“on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word”** (Isa. 66:2).
  - (c) **“My flesh trembles in fear of you,”** wrote the psalmist; **“I stand in awe of your laws”** (Ps. 119:120).

**C. Revival Happens When We Want God’s Work to Succeed.**

- 1) God had told him that He was **“working a work”** in the world (Hab. 1:5), and now the prophet prayed that God would keep that work alive and cause it to prosper.
- 2) What God was doing wasn’t the work Habakkuk would have chosen, but he accepted God’s plan and prayed, **“Thy will be done.”**
- 3) When God revealed that work to Habakkuk, he cried out, **“We shall not die!”** (1:12).
- 4) Then in 2:4, God told him that the only way to live was by faith.
- 5) So, when Habakkuk prayed for God’s work to stay alive, he was also praying that his own faith might grow.

**D. Finally, Revival Happens when we want God to show mercy.**

- 1) The prophet agreed that the people of Judah deserved to be chastened, and that God’s chastening would work out for their good;
- 2) He asked that God’s heart of love would reveal itself in mercy.

**E. If, like Habakkuk, you ever become discouraged about your spiritual life, take time to pray and God to Revive His Work**

- 1) The greatest need in our Church today is for God’s work to be revived.
- 2) This revival begins when we ask God to revive us

**Prayer transforms us when...**

**2. We Pray for a Vision of God’s Greatness** (Vv. 3-15)

**A Vision of ...**

**A. God Coming in Splendor** Vv. 3-5

- 1) Mt. Paran is another name for the entire Sinai Peninsula, or for Mt. Sinai itself
- 2) Regardless of the actual location it is speaking of God’s revealing Himself to Moses on Mt Sinai
- 3) Everything in these 3 verses reveals God’s Glory

- (a) He is called *"Holy One"* this is a title used some 30 times in Isaiah alone
  - (b) It says His, *"glory covered the heavens"* this is looking forward to a time when His glory will cover all the earth (2:14); we see this in Rev. 21-22
  - (c) All creation will join in His praise
  - (d) It says that His brightness was as the light – In Rev 21:23 ***"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof..."***
- 4) Finally, verse 5 takes us back to a time in Egypt when God revealed His power and glory in the plagues and pestilences that devastated the land and took the lives of the firstborn
- 5) Those 10 plagues were not only punishment for the hardness of Pharaoh's heart but to demonstrate the vanity and folly of looking to other god's than to the one true God.

#### A Vision of ...

##### B. God Standing in Power Vv. 6-7

- 1) In war a general either pushes forward to gain ground or fall back in retreat and to regroup.
- 2) The Lord did neither; he **Stood** and faced the enemy unafraid.
- 3) In fact he was so confident and strong that he *"measured the earth"* a sign that He owns everything.
  - (a) To measure something is an indication that it is yours and that you can do with it was you please
  - (b) Measuring is also a first step to action – before you go and cut a piece of wood to fit someplace you take a measurement.
  - (c) Measuring is also a way of taking a survey of the situation and allows you to estimate just how much power it will take to accomplish you intended course
- 4) Here we see our mighty God taking stock of the situation and deciding just what it will take to complete his wrath upon the land
- 5) The Lord reveal his Power when eh shook the land before he delivered the law and he was about to do it again here.

#### A Vision of...

##### C. God Marching in Victory vv. 8-16

- 1) Habakkuk uses dynamic poetic imagery to describe Israel's march through the wilderness as they followed the Lord to the Promised land and then claimed their inheritance.
  - (a) **Deliverance V.8**
    - (1) The Red Sea opened
    - (2) The Jordan parted
    - (3) The Egyptian chariots sank and the occupants all died
    - (4) But God's chariots were chariots of salvation
  - (b) **Defeat of the enemies en route to the Promise land V.9**
  - (c) **Defeat of the enemies of God in the Promise land V. 10**
  - (d) **Delay of a Day V. 11**
    - (1) The sun and moon stood still
    - (2) The miracle of Joshua when the day was prolonged so he could win the victory (Jos 10:12-13)
- 2) Leading His army, God marched through Canaan like a farmer threshing grain, and His people claimed their inheritance V. 12

##### D. Habakkuk is Describing A Great God.

- 1) There may be some disagreement on all the specifics of when and what is being described here, but there is one thing that is not in disagreement;
  - (a) The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ s the God of glory who reveals His glory in creation and in history
  - (b) There is no substitute for good theology, whether in our sermons or in our songs.
- 2) The shallowness of some contemporary Churches today is evident in shallow sermons, books, and songs
  - (a) The weakness of the church is the increase in "religious entertainment" in meetings
  - (b) Rather than them being a time where we ought to be praising God
- 3) The thing that lifted Habakkuk to the mountaintop was his understanding of the greatness of God.

- 4) We need a return to the kind of worship that focuses on the glory of God and seeks to honor Him alone.

**Prayer transforms us when...**

3. **Our prayer is based upon real faith in God** (Vv. 17-19) - This is one of the greatest confessions of faith found anywhere in Scripture. Habakkuk has faced the frightening fact that his nation will be invaded by a merciless enemy. The prophet knows that many of the people will go into exile and many will be slain. The land will be ruined, and Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed. *Yet he tells God that he will trust Him no matter what happens!* Listen to his confession of faith:

**A. I will wait patiently on the Lord** V. 16

- 1) The last part of V. 16 should be *"that I should be resting or [lying] down quietly in the day of trouble when He comes up against the people who will invade us."*
- 2) The word rest indicates someone who is waiting patiently of something
- 3) If Habakkuk had depended on his feelings, he would never have made this great confession of faith
  - (a) If he looked ahead he saw a nation heading for destruction – that would scare him
  - (b) When he looked within, he saw himself trembling with fear
  - (c) when he looked around, he saw everything in the economy about to fall apart
  - (d) But when he looked up by faith, he saw God, and all his fears vanished
- 4) Habakkuk could wait quietly and patiently because he knew that God was at work in the world because he had prayed that God's work would be kept alive and strong and he knew it would be

**B. I will rejoice in the Lord** Vv. 17-18

- 1) It's one thing to "whistle in the dark" and try to bolster our courage, and quite something else to sing about the eternal God who never fails
- 2) Though his lips were trembling and his legs were shaking (Hab. 3:16), the prophet burst into song and worshiped his God
  - (a) What an example for us to follow! It reminds us of our Lord before He went to the cross
  - (b) Paul and Silas in the Philippian dungeon
  - (c) God can give us "songs in the night" if we'll trust Him and see His greatness

**C. I will rely on the Lord** V. 19

- 1) If my legs were shaking and my heart pounding, I'd find a safe place to sit down and relax, but Habakkuk began to bound up the mountain like a deer!
  - (a) Because of his faith in the Lord, he was able to stand and be as sure-footed as a deer;
  - (b) he was able to run swiftly and go higher than he'd ever gone before
- 2) Habakkuk teaches us to face our doubts and questions honestly, take them humbly to the Lord, wait for His Word to teach us, and then worship Him no matter how we feel or what we see.
- 3) God doesn't always change the circumstances, but He can change us to meet the circumstances. That's what it means to live by faith.