

# When God Seems Silent: A Study of Habakkuk

## Lesson Eleven: The Woeful Cost of Pride (2:6-20)

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### Introduction:

- I. A tortoise, dissatisfied with his lowly life looked up and admired the birds flying among the clouds. He thought that if he could only get up into the air, he could soar with the best of them. One day he called upon an eagle and offered him all the treasures of the ocean if he would teach him to fly. The eagle declined saying that the tortoise was not able to float in the sky as the birds. The proud tortoise persisted in pressing the eagle and finally the eagle agreed. The eagle took the tortoise up to a great height and let go. "Now then!" cried the eagle, "Fly!" But the tortoise, before he could answer, fell upon a rock and was dashed to pieces. (Aesop, #11,175, 641, Vol. 2).
- II. 🚫 Pride is always regarded in Scripture as an indication of one who is foolish (Proverbs 21:24). Pride has 🚫 historically brought the ruin of great nations. "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever" (Thomas Jefferson, 1784). Pride is 🚫 Satan's universal temptation which eventually ensnares believers.
- III. The text presents a frank exposure of pride.
  1. The discussion actually began in 2:4 as the contrast of life's attitudes was given – those who live by "faith" will demonstrate humility and submit to God; those who are "proud" will not find "life" but death because they have turned from God to self.
  2. Babylon 🚫 illustrates those who are "proud." The nation 🚫 symbolizes all opposed to God and in Revelation this symbol again shows the utter disdain that God has for the proud.
  3. "Habakkuk had cried out for a public vindication of God's name and righteousness... The Babylonians' shame for their evil deeds must be equal in intensity to the injustice suffered by good men and women at the hands of the Babylonians...The wealth the Babylonians accumulated by unjust means must be relinquished." (Kaiser, 173)
  4. Pride comes to man 🚫 with a high cost. 🚫 Many are unaware of its price until it's too late. Many 🚫 are subtly tempted to yield to pride without considering its end (🚫 Proverbs 22:3).
  5. Study this paragraph now and consider the "end" for all who follow pride's prodding.

### Body:

- I. 🚫 Pride's victims (verse 6a)
  - A. Although Babylon appeared invincible, the nation would become the object of ridicule. All who had been oppressed by Babylon's evil would join in condemning her.
  - B. Pride's modern victims will also testify against its evil.
    1. Those victims may not understand why God did not prevent the evil from happening.
    2. Yet, they can know that evil will be judged by God – it does not escape His eyes! (Ezekiel 9:10)
    3. Learn – when pride controls your life there will be those hurt by your acts and eventually, they will speak about your evil and God will repay (Jeremiah 51:56b). Remember, when we are abused by those directed by pride and we are not able to explain why the evil has happened to us, we must "walk by faith" knowing that Judgment will come! (Matthew 18:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 8:1, 12)
- II. 🚫 Pride's vile traits (verses 6b–19)

Babylon demonstrated actions that characterize all who are dominated by pride. Notice how each action was seen in Babylon and exists in modern times.

  - A. 🚫 Greed and Ambition (verses 6–8)

1. The woe here is upon selfish ambition – the zeal to “get ahead,” find success, at any price.
2. Babylon took things with greed – totally occupied with selfish pleasure, happiness, comfort, and convenience. They could not be satisfied – “one more was not enough”!
3. Their greed was satisfied by taking from others. The image here is of one incurring a great debt by borrowing (verses 6b–7). Babylon gained what she sought but it cost a price that was not reckoned. They were foolishly borrowing and one day when the collector would call for payment, they would not be able to pay!

“It looked as if Babylon was getting away with everything. But they weren’t getting away with anything at all. Whenever we sin and rob somebody else, we are adding up for ourselves a debt that is going to be paid with compounded interest” (Wiersbe, 62)

4. Let us realize that greed has no “truth in lending obligations”! It offers a promise of gain but only pays with sorrow (Proverbs 22:16; 30:8, 9).

B. ☞ Evil Cunning to benefit self (verses 9–11)

1. Because of Babylon’s selfish attitude the nation began to practice ☞ evil acts so she could obtain the coveted items. Habakkuk’s words portray Babylon as ☞ trusting in material gains for security. The nation thought she was above all others and secure (“nest on high”). She ☞ oppressed others thinking it would offer her protection. But she had no security! (Obadiah 1:4).
2. Many think they can find security in promotions, wealth, and possessions. They devise schemes to advance and find security. In seeking success, they ☞ treat others with insensitivity (verse 10). Even when they are “successful” their evil cunning testifies against them (verse 11). There is ☞ no security (Luke 12:15).
3. Those who are victims of this selfish success need to read the text to find hope. All who have been manipulated by self-serving “ladder climbers” need to remember that nothing escapes the notice of our Holy God (Psalm 121:4).
4. All who trust in their own cunning for becoming successful must heed this point. Babylon was building her Empire at the expense of others. She thought that by destroying others she could gain security. But she forgot God! (Daniel 2:21)
5. ☞ When greedy, selfish people gain success via evil cunning that destroys others, we ask – “Where is God?” Habakkuk tells us that God knows what has happened and the evildoer will be punished! All will be known.

C. ☞ Violence to achieve goals (verses 12-14).

1. Once controlled by greed Babylon ☞ was willing to do anything to achieve her goals. She ☞ killed without mercy; ☞ exploited without compromise; and ☞ destroyed without hesitation. But ☞ all her success would vanish as if it was burned by fire!
2. The violence of our modern age is a tragic illustration of how pride ☞ controls modern behavior.
  - a. Pride leads us to ☞ abuse others who get in the way of self’s goals.
  - b. Pride leads us to put ☞ our desires above the welfare of others and take what is not our own.
  - c. Pride has ☞ desensitized us to violence, poor health choices, profanity, and immorality – we want “it” so we go for it!
3. Pride has ☞ slain the absolutes of God upon the altar of selfishness!
4. Where is God when violence is running rampant? Why does He allow bad things to happen? Why do the wicked seem victorious as they selfishly pursue happiness at other’s expense? These sentiments were echoed by Habakkuk. God has now answered him.

- a. Violence gives only ☞ the prospect of success – it is actually utter failure.
- b. One day all will realize this Truth (verse 14). What pride ☞ has gained via violence will vanish! (2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:11-15).
- c. In the end, the proud will be humbled as they realize their efforts are all for naught; they have ☞ worked for nothing! Imagine their shock – ☞ all of the toil, all of the exploiting, all of their labors – were does it end – all is vanity! In the final analysis, their violence is futile.

D. ☞ Immorality to satisfy self (verses 15-17)

1. The harsh words refer to Babylon's approval of drinking alcoholic beverages. It was a nation renown for excesses in alcohol.
2. The metaphor of inviting another to drink can refer to offering promises, benefits, and honors to weaker nations under the guise of helping them but in actuality it was done for selfishness. "The 'poison' in the pleasant 'drink' offered by rapacious Babylon refers to the trap by which the target state is deceived and delivered into the hands of Babylon" (Coffman, 95).
3. Interpreted literally this section pronounces a curse upon all advocates of social drinking of alcoholic beverages! (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; Isaiah 56:12).
4. In this woe we see how pride's selfishness entices and seduces others for personal pleasure and then discards after their usefulness has ended.
5. Galatians 5:16 – here is how one can overcome pride at this point! There is never justification for one to participate in immorality to satisfy self! (Luke 9:23).

E. ☞ Idolatry (verses 18–19)

1. Babylon reveals the ☞ inevitable end of pride – one eventually sets himself as "god." Babylon's pride had so deceived her that the nation forgot Jehovah's sovereignty!
2. We must beware lest pride's idolatry captures our hearts today. Idolatry places ☞ something before God. We do not have to carve wood, etch stone, or mold metals to dispossess God!
  - a. ☞ If a Christian does not have time for prayer and study, but time for TV, social media and hobbies—is this idolatry?
  - b. ☞ If a Christian finds time for exercise, aerobics, softball, but not time for study—is this idolatry?
  - c. ☞ If a Christian can work overtime, or a second job, but has not time for God—is this idolatry?
  - d. Idolatry is ☞ removing God from the first place and replacing Him with something else (Matthew 6:33). Its focus is upon man, not God (Romans 1:19, 21-25).

III. ☞ Pride's woeful harvest (verses 6b–19)

Babylon's fate reveals that God will not allow ☞ the proud to escape (Ezekiel 9:10). Throughout this taunt-song Habakkuk records the tragedy ☞ awaiting all who follow pride's prodding.

A. Plunder (verse 7)

Even though it appeared successful in their greedy pursuit, they would lose everything! They would receive what they gave! (Galatians 6:7, 8; Numbers 32:23). The "end" would rectify all wrongs.

B. Shame (verse 10)

Even though Babylon appeared successful, the truth of her prosperity would be announced. Sin always brings shame (Jeremiah 7:19). Instead of everlasting glory/honor, the proud finds everlasting shame/disgrace (Habakkuk 2:16).

C. Futility (13b)

Nothing would remain of their great success! All their energies will be wasted. In the end their entire existence is futile—no profit (Habakkuk 2:18).

#### IV. ☞ Pride's ultimate realization (verse 20)

A. In dramatic contrast with the lifeless gods of Babylon is the ☞ Almighty Jehovah God!

1. Even when pride is plundering and bringing ruin – God is in control!
2. When ☞ pride has blinded others so they only pursue selfishness – God is reigning and He sees all!
3. God is in heaven, on His throne, caring for His own. He knows all and will bring justice to all!
4. This assurance brought great comfort to Habakkuk and to all who struggle with evil's apparent triumph on earth.

"It must have been a great assurance to Habakkuk to realize that God was in His holy temple. The Babylonians might invade and destroy the temple on earth but the temple in heaven was going to be kept pure and holy. No one could invade that temple" (Wiersbe, 53).

B. The text emphasizes these points to all struggling with doubt and questions –

1. ☞ Jehovah is Sovereign – "But Jehovah" is not like the worldly idols.
2. ☞ Jehovah is Righteous – "His holy temple." He will not abandon the righteous ways. Justice will follow.
3. ☞ Jehovah is Lord – "let all the earth." No one is beyond His commands. All will answer to Him.
4. ☞ Jehovah is Absolute – "keep silence." His ways may not be understood, but they are right. No one should question, but all should submit (Psalm 46:10; Zechariah 2:13).
5. Note: Even ☞ when evil is expressed in the strongest possible way, and it disheartens saints, Habakkuk 2:20 reinvigorates steadfastness! It calls for a "silence" of trusting submission to God's will.
6. "It light of this, ☞ what, then is our final conclusion? God forbid that we should trust or commit ourselves to any power other than God Himself, to any idols man may set up... There must be no querying, no questioning, no uncertainty about the goodness and the holiness and the power of God... Look up to God. Look at the ultimate and the absolute. Then let us put our hands upon our mouths that are so ready to speak foolishly. Let us realize that He is there in the temple of the universe, God over all. Let us silently humble ourselves and bow down before Him and worship Him" (Lloyd-Jones, 56).

#### Conclusion:

I. Habakkuk's answer has now been given. This taunt-song presents a side of God often ☞ neglected – His divine wrath and righteous judgment.

1. Evil may appear to escape punishment but rest assured it will face God.
2. ☞ God will compel all who follow PRIDE to drink a double portion of divine wrath (Revelation 14:8; 17:2; 18:3 (verse 6)). Rest assured – ☞ no one will escape!

II. Pride may run rampant in our world. It may lead to turmoil and trials. But ☞ God will confront all who fail to honor Him, who do not respect justice or human dignity, who love darkness more than light, evil more than good, and who have neither pity nor conscience.

1. In the face of discouraging trials, Habakkuk is told that there is hope for the future.
2. All of life's trials are working out the counsels of God's will. Though we cannot understand, we can walk by faith and find life (Habakkuk 2:4-8).

3. Habakkuk 2:20 📖 presents an abiding principle – God is over all. The worldling may make a fortune in an evil business, but remember the “end” will come. Woe is declared upon all who oppose God and who live by pride. They are doomed!

III. Habakkuk’s question (1:2) has been completely answered in 2:14. When the earth is filled with knowledge then all of the inexplicables of life will be known. No matter how strong evil may seem, it is not stronger than God. God will triumph over it and righteousness will prevail!

📖 Our Next Lesson: “When inequities are balanced”