

September 13, 2026 - Habakkuk 2:5-8 "Lesson 1: The Lie of More"

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[0:00] Please turn with me to Habakkuk 2, 5-8. Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest.

! His greed is as wide as Sheol. Like death, he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.

Shall not all these take up their taunt against him with scoffing and riddles for him and say, Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own! For how long? And loads himself with pledges!

Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you.

For the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them. This is God's word. Thank you to God. Praise the Lord. Thank you for reading today.

[1:20] We begin what may feel like a, sort of like a mini-series in our Habakkuk series. So a little like sub-subset of verses we're going to be walking through.

That I'm basically calling five lessons from Babylon. Five lessons from Babylon. Because beginning here in verse 6, God is going to pronounce five separate woes against Babylon.

These are five warnings to them. Five judgments. Five exposures of what's happening beneath all of Babylon's apparent success.

Each one of us, each one of them teaches us something. And we're reminded, I think, of a quote that makes this mini-series within our major series worth it.

Charles Spurgeon said, Put your finger on any prosperous page in the church's history. Put your finger on any prosperous page in church's history.

[2:28] And I will find a little marginal note reading thus. In this age, men could readily see where the church began and where the world ended.

David Platt even considered this quote and looked upon the condition of our age. Are we in that age today? Can we clearly see where the church begins and where the world ends?

And he concluded, the reality is, quote, We live in a day where we cannot tell where the world ends and the church begins. It's completely counter to what Spurgeon is saying.

In other words, it's beneficial to look at the danger of sin, I believe. To look upon Babylon, essentially, in a theological sense, in order to guard ourselves from drifting towards that world rather than striving after God.

And after all, isn't it easier to drift? Kind of just exist? Just float around in life? And all of a sudden, we look like nothing like the bride of Christ.

[3:50] Isn't it easier to drift than it is to strive? I strive Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 6 a.m. with Carmen in Planet Fitness. I know what it is to strive, and it stinks.

Right? It is easier to drift into that next dream. Hit snooze one more time. But it is so much more difficult to strive.

And I think that looking at Babylon will help us to look at what we're to be striving for. Remember, this is where Habakkuk is at his watch post.

In verse 4, we saw, behold, his soul, Babylon, his soul is puffed up. We saw this last week. It is not upright within him, but the righteous, Habakkuk, the righteous shall live by faith.

And so, as we enter verse 5 today, we must not lose sight of Habakkuk and just all be encompassed in Babylon. I think that we'd be doing Habakkuk a disservice to do so.

[4:58] Because you and I, we can so easily find ourselves tempted by the ways of the world as people who don't know how to wait. Habakkuk is learning how to wait.

And so are we. Some of us are doing better than others in our waiting. But we don't often know how to wait. Especially when Babylon takes, they conquer, they accumulate, they see what they want, and they say, I'm going to have that.

And they go and slaughter people in order to take it. So as we enter into this five lessons from Babylon, we will soon see in part one today, sort of just this point coming to fruition, especially towards the end, is that because Christ is enough, we can wait with contentment for everything God has promised.

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Everything in this first woe is about discontentment.

Spoiler alert. But you heard it. And I'm going to break these four verses into three separate sections in order to prepare our hearts for such a lesson. The sermon title today is lesson one, essentially.

[6:26] Lesson one of five. The lie of more. We're going to be breaking down this first woe in just this introductory sort of verses that lead into this first woe.

And let's pray for the Lord to help us in our time as we dive into God's word and try to examine our hearts lest we drift so that we may strive.

Let's pray. Lord, we come to you collectively today as your church. We thank you for all that you are doing within our body and our congregational body.

We pray for those who might have a very difficult time at sometimes even looking in the mirror, not to mention looking at Scripture as a mirror.

Father, help us all, and myself included, to look into the mirror today of Scripture. Father, help me, may you have mercy on me and all of us that we may not drift, that we may be a church that is clearly marked out with the demarcation of where the world ends and the church begins.

[7:51] Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So I got three points today. The first point is that pride never satisfied.

Pride is never satisfied. And we see this in verse 5. But coming out of verse 4, I think this is important to see what the author is doing here.

Coming out of verse 4, God returns our attention to the proud. We kind of resolved it. He was talking about the pride, the he last week of being puffed up.

But he said there's a contrast. But the righteous shall live by faith. And that's where we ended it. But the author seems to go back. He gets us ready to go back.

He allows Habakkuk and us to resolve last week's verse. But he wants to go back. There's something that he wants Habakkuk to see. And he says, moreover, here, he wants us to see, he wants to expose something that's happening within that prideful man, regardless of what could be seen on the outside.

[9:03] I mean, Babylon was incredibly successful. They were a nation that looked like they had it all together. There was no stopping them. The empire is growing. Armies are winning.

Borders are expanding. Kings are falling. And all from the outside looking in, Babylon looks like a nation getting everything that its heart desires. But God lets us see underneath it all.

And what do we find in this nation? We see that this conquest is an appetite that can never be filled. It is an appetite that can never be filled.

Verse 5, look at the description here of this man. This man, this man who's puffed up. Verse 5 describes him as arrogant, restless, and having never enough.

Even the opening reference to wine, I think, is fitting. I was like scratching my head. I'm like, what is going on here with the Hebrew? And made me really research a little bit here.

[10:05] And I think it's fitting because wine can be intoxicating. Wine can be intoxicating. Distorting our judgment and promising pleasure.

Only to betray the one who gives himself over to it. Babylon has become intoxicated with its own greatness.

It's completely intoxicated. One victory leads to the desire to another victory. And yesterday's success and the scoreboard from yesterday becomes like today's minimum expectation.

What we did yesterday, we're just going to do again today. And moreover, we're going to do more. Right? You see, church, pride is never content.

Pride is never content. It always needs more. Habakkuk gives us an incredible image here. Look, look at his description.

[11:07] His greed is as wide as Sheol. Like death, he has never enough.

I know y'all are probably like, what is that? Sheol? How do you pronounce that? I want you to picture something in this culture.

Sheol is an Old Testament term that's used to define the realm of the dead, essentially. I'm really breaking it down.

There's a lot of depth to Sheol, but I don't think that I need to expand upon it now. I want you guys to get the point here. It's this realm of the dead. Scripture often pictures it as deep, like it has no end.

It's an unmeasurable depth, Sheol. It's insatiable, Sheol is. It's impossible to satisfy. And so think about it.

[12:06] In the context of how it was written and who it was written to, Sheol never says, Well, we're full, right?

I mean, death never says that it's had enough. No. Generation after generation that enters the grave and the grave keeps receiving and God says, that's Babylon's appetite.

They are never satisfied. And even notice the language at the end. He gathers himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.

Did you catch that? The center of Babylon's world is self-absorbed. They only care about themselves. Babylon is living for Babylon.

Everything exists to serve his desires, magnify their glory, and satisfy their appetites. Oh, boy.

[13:17] There is a danger in self-rule. There is a danger in self-rule. It turns everything around us in all of our lives when we yield to self-rule.

It turns everything into something that needs to be consumed for our own satisfaction. And we can never get enough as pride fuels that.

And often it's at the expense of other people. Like we do this at times. I hope I describe at least one of you today.

I know I describe myself in a couple of these. It's people who become valuable according to what they can give us. Who can I benefit from most?

Right? Money becomes valuable according to what it allows us to experience. Success becomes valuable according to what it says about us.

[14:25] Even relationships can become another source of validation in our own lives. Or better yet, for leaders, church leaders.

Ministry can become something that we use to feed our desire for recognition. Now, obviously, Babylon is an extreme example.

But isn't the appetite painfully familiar to us? I don't know how that translates in everyone's lives. But I hope the Holy Spirit, I trust the Holy Spirit, can really contextualize that into your own hearts today.

I mean, think about it. Think about the question. How much money is enough? How much is enough? How much recognition is enough?

How much control is enough for you? How much success is enough? How much comfort? That's a big one. How much comfort is enough for you?

[15:32] How many of us need to affirm? How many people need to affirm us before we can finally feel valuable? How many, how much does someone have to love us before we can finally stop being afraid that somebody is going to abandon us and leave?

How much security do we need to finally stop worrying? Well, it's pretty clear. The proud heart says, I will finally be okay when...

I will finally be okay when I make a little more money. I will finally be okay when my circumstances change.

I will finally be okay when this relationship improves. Or I will finally be okay when my health improves, and etc.

But an appetite ruled by self will never be satisfied. It is as wide as Sheol.

[16:43] What a sight for Habakkuk. Think about him. Don't forget about Habakkuk. From the outside here, we see Habakkuk looking at Babylon as they appear to have everything that they could ever want.

And consider Judah in this frame. Judah's weak. They're messed up. They need to stop and get some help. Right?

Babylon, though, is strong. Habakkuk is waiting, but Babylon is taking. It just does not make sense. From the outside, Habakkuk looks like the loser, and Babylon looks like the winner.

And God pulls back the curtain and says, Well, Habakkuk, look again. Look again. Babylon has wealth. Yeah, they have wealth. They have power.

They have nations and success, but they still cannot rest. You see, having more and being satisfied are two very different things.

[17 : 57] Having more and being satisfied are two very different things. And that is exactly what Habakkuk needs to see while he waits well.

Furthermore, when Babylon says, I need more, God is teaching Habakkuk what it means, By the righteous shall live by faith.

Let's continue, though, in verse 6 and 7, as we hear the victims of Babylon's pride to begin to speak.

We see in this second point that pride, clicker, there we go, sin. Sin carries a debt. We see this in the verses 6 through 7 leading into the first woe.

Sin carries a debt. Verse 6 begins with a complete reversal. From verse 5, think about the context. Think about the verses that we just read before.

[18 : 57] In verse 5, the nations that Babylon gathered for himself, the nations he gathered for himself or his own purpose, are now, in verse 6, the nations gathering their voice against Babylon.

And so we should see a little bit of a reversal come here. And furthermore, even if we go even back to chapter 1, verse 10, Babylon scoffs at kings and laughs at every fortress, and now Babylon becomes the object of scoffing.

Do you see that in verse 6? Shall not all these take up their taunt against him with scoffing and riddles for him and say woe to him?

This is flipping the entire script. The scoffer of chapter 1 becomes the scoffed in chapter 2.

Hear the first woe erupt from the page. Woe to you who heaps up what is not his own. Well, that'll wake you up. Babylon's greatness has been built by accumulating essentially what belongs to others.

[20 : 14] But notice the question. For how long? Do you see those two M dashes? Rick's like, amen. For how long?

And that sounds familiar, doesn't it, church? Sounds very familiar. Habakkuk asks that question in the second verse of this book. Oh, Lord, how long? And God answered in chapter 2, verse 3 here. God answers, the vision has an appointed time. And then he says here, will not your debtors suddenly arise? There's an appointed time that those who have been betrayed and received injustice will arise.

The obvious answer is yes. And notice the word suddenly. This means that God's judgment may appear delayed, but when the appointed moment comes, the reversal can happen very quickly. Suddenly. Here we see. Suddenly it happens. I want you to learn a little bit of Hebrew today, or at least go home with it and toy around with it, because there's a really, really fascinating wordplay here in verse 6 and 7.

[21 : 38] And considering the context of Babylon spending years stealing from others and calling it wealth, right? They're just glorified mobsters, essentially.

Verse 6 says Babylon is actually loading himself with pledges, or I think it's better to be understood. He's loading himself with debts.

That as he believes he's accumulating wealth for himself, he's actually accumulating debts. Taking from them is accumulating a debt upon themselves, and so on and so forth.

Pledges, as our translation says. But the joke of the riddle extends into verse 7 that indicates Babylon thinks that it's getting richer, but the taunt says that he's actually getting more indebted. So that's kind of like the riddle that's being told here by those that those who are oppressed are taunting against him.

[22 : 39] And here's the wordplay. The word debtors means to bite, but the same word family was also used for charging interest on a loan.

And so not only are they debtors, but they're biting debtors. Biting debtors. The people Babylon thought were his debtors become his biting creditors, biting debtors.

In other words, Babylon thought everything that belonged to them that they took belonged to them. And God says the account is still open, actually. Babylon still has a payment coming. There's still a balance due. And as we see in verse 7, Babylon will spoil for them. Even as verse 8, as we'll see in just a moment, the plunderer becomes the plunder.

Man, church, this is how sin feels at times. Sin feels, often feels, profitable because the invoice doesn't immediately arrive.

[23:52] Black Friday is coming. Credit card swipers know it. Know that feeling. It's painless to swipe a card and get all this stuff, right? It's actually quite therapeutic, I would say.

But in a very sad sense. Sin often feels profitable because the invoice does not immediately arrive. Like swiping a credit card. But church, this is where we have to be careful. Don't mistake delayed consequence for divine indifference over your sin.

Oh, well, everything seems to continue to go well. And God seems to be apparently blessing my work. I just got a promotion. All the while I'm having an affair, right?

Oh, well, maybe this isn't so bad after all, right? I'm talking hypothetically. You know, just because it doesn't seem like the consequence is arriving, it's delayed for some reason, doesn't mean that God is treating it with indifference.

[25:11] Man, how much trouble we would avoid if we could just see sin like this. Like Babylon could look at this empire and say, look, look how well everything we're doing is just working.

This is great. But God looks at the same empire and says, look at the debt you're accumulating. Look at the debt you're accumulating. Look at that debt.

This is where the gospel gives us great hope, church, for those who find themselves trapped in this position where they think, they have thought, you've fought for the lie that God is blessing something in your life all the while that there's unrepentant sin going on and somehow you can justify things because of what's going on.

If that is you today, this is where the gospel gives you such great hope because Christ does not ignore the debt of our sin. He knows the balance.

He knows everything in the depths of your heart and soul that you struggle with. And at the cross, that judgment that our sin accumulated fell upon him.

[26:35] He took our place on the cross so that everyone who trusts in Jesus can stand before God with an account that is settled, paid in full.

And looking at even the blood-stained cross, that wood on that day of that cross, you can't tell me that sin is a small thing. As if you're delaying this lack of consequence as some indifference from God.

Don't say and lie to yourself that sin is small. Sin is greater than we, our minds can even fathom. And God's holiness is far greater than we can fathom as well.

Maybe you look upon your account today and you're not in Christ and you just kind of wandered into Steel Valley Church to grab a cup of coffee and meet some nice people. They are lovely folk. But maybe you're just, you're becoming very weary at this moment of God's word speaking that you are concerned about the amount of debt that you owe.

[27:57] You just got too much on your record. That bill's pretty high. Right? Right? You've just done too much. You've strayed too far.

But turning from your sin and having faith in Jesus lands you out of your sin and in the arms of Jesus Christ. And that is the good news of the gospel, of having faith in Jesus Christ.

So settle your account today and be saved by your faith in Jesus. And verse 8 tells us why the account is coming due as well. We see something develop here in the third point of why it's coming due.

And that God sees the whole field of damage. In verse 8 we see, because you have plundered many nations, all the remnants of the people shall plunder you for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities, and to all who dwell in them.

Now, God tells us exactly why the reversal is coming.

[29:06] And notice how precise that justice is. He says, because you have plundered many nations, Babylon, you shall be plundered.

There's not much room to twist that interpretation. It's pretty clear in our Bibles. The same action is going to come back to Babylon.

It will be returned to Babylon. All the offenses will be justly dealt with back to Babylon. So this is kind of like courtroom language.

It's sort of the verdict. Like, you did this. There's all this evidence. All this debt weighed against you. And therefore, this judgment is coming upon you.

The case is pretty much closed. You see, God's judgment is never sort of random or on a whim, arbitrary. But God judges evil according to what actually is evil.

[30:07] Further, consider the phrase, all the remnants of the peoples. All the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you. I love the word remnant.

It's a sobering word. It's like, if you could think, like Babylon's violence was so severe that many were simply just gone. Cities were desecrated.

Families were shattered and lives were taken. But there's a remnant that survives. And that remnant, these would be the ones who are front row in this fall of Babylon.

They are front row to justice, chanting Babylon's funeral song, essentially, taunting them in victory. In fact, verse 8 goes even deeper than stolen property. It says, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

[31:10] Man, it's not just like they stole your Xbox or something. Like, no, they like literally were chopping people up. They were desecrating them.

Complete cities utterly destroyed. And their greed, their pride, had quite a blast radius. Literally. Literally. They would not stop and people bled. Cities were suffering. Communities were devastated. And Babylon clearly were deceived because they measured their actions by what they were getting.

Well, you know, we're not doing too bad. We just took out this nation. We're going to go after that one.

There's so many times in life where I think that we ask ourselves, like, does God see this happening? And is he going to do anything about it?

[32:10] Here we can be relieved because God sees it all. He sees every injustice. He sees your injustice that occurred to you.

Sees it. In church, we fall for sin's great deception as well. We tend to measure it by what we get when God sees everything that sin touches.

We fall for this deception. Like, God sees the whole field of damage. He sees everything. Every person that's affected by this. He sees the consequences that we justify and just overlook.

He sees the wounds that we never notice and the people our selfishness and pride affects. And sin whispers promises, like, look at what you gain from this.

Isn't it delightful to the eyes? Isn't it good to see? But God's word says, look at what it does.

[33:18] Whatever sin promises, grace offers infinitely more to sinners who repent. And this brings the first woe to a complete conclusion.

Babylon spent its life taking more only to discover that its appetite produced debt, destruction, and finally, judgments. So what does Babylon's restless appetite teach Habakkuk about how God's people are supposed to wait?

Well, this is the first lesson. The lie of more. It's the first lesson.

The lie of more is that satisfaction is always one thing away. Just one more thing will, everything will get right. Right?

Babylon keeps taking because Babylon never learns to wait. But Habakkuk is being taught another way. How? Verse 4, we saw it last week, the righteous shall live by faith.

[34:32] And church, this is where we have to guard ourselves from drifting. We have to guard ourselves from drifting towards the world. because Babylon says, I need more. That's literally the chorus of the world, church.

Literally every commercial is trying to implant the idea that you need more. Look at the psychology behind commercials. Talk to Daniel after service.

He probably has a great insight into that. Babylon says, I need more, but faith says, I have Christ. Christ. This world says you need another for it, but you say, I have Christ.

In all things. Now, this isn't saying that we have to stop longing, we have to stop praying, or waiting, but it means tomorrow's answer does not have to become our source of contentment today.

Let tomorrow worry about itself, as the author James says and instructs, because in the gospel, God has already given us his son. And if he's given us his son, he's given us salvation, what else do

y'all need?

[35 : 47] It's so silly, isn't it? But it's so true. So while you are waiting for healing, while you're waiting for justice, while you're waiting for provision, or for answer, or Jesus Christ's return, you just want Christ to return, we don't have to wait empty handed, church.

We have Christ, and we have everything that we'll ever need. Because Christ is enough, we can wait with contentment for everything God has promised.

Let's pray.