

September 20, 2026 - Habakkuk 2:9-11 - "Lesson 2: Sin Cannot Make You Safe"

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[0:00] Please turn in your Bibles to Habakkuk 2, 9-11. Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm.

You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples. You have forfeited your life. For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork will spawn. This is God's Word. It's great to be continuing in the series today, and we will be looking in the second woe today.

I want to remind you of kind of what I'm doing with these woes, really breaking these woes down in order to examine the failings of the ways of the world, essentially.

If I can make it really, really plain and simple, just examining the ways of the world and how they do things in hopes that we might be able to identify ways that we have adapted and adopted their ideology and viewpoints into our own lives as Christians.

[1:29] And the Bible commands us, and God expects us to be separate from the ways of the world. I mentioned a quote last week from Charles Spurgeon, and then David Platt actually reinforced it, that it's very hard today to tell where the world ends and the church begins.

And I think that's very true, sadly true in our day. But if you look through church history, you see that the great moments that exist in church history is when it was clearly separated by where the world ended and the church began.

Those were the great moments of people repenting and turning to God face down to the ground just in humility and surrender. And right now, I think that line is very blurred and confused.

And so, I think it would be very, very helpful for us to look at these woes within the context of Habakkuk.

We'll remember that in verse 1, Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 1, Habakkuk was, he was crying out to the Lord.

[2:47] He was seeking the Lord in a way that he knew what he believed about God, and he couldn't understand. He couldn't reconcile the issues that were going on around him with Judah and his own nation, who are to represent the Lord.

And see that, what was going on around, and then what God says, who he is. And he couldn't reconcile all this stuff. It's in confusion, and ultimately, it led to a point in verse 1, or chapter 1.

I keep saying verse 1, I'm sorry. Chapter 1, where he sits in his watch post, and he waits to see what the Lord answers him. And the Lord's giving him answers right now as to what the Lord is doing, and that the Lord does hear clearly.

He hears Habakkuk's cries and his issues that he's having, but also the Lord sees clearly, too. He sees so clearly. He sees the enemy, and he's describing the enemy.

And so, by us taking these woes individually, I think it gives us an opportunity to really examine our lives as to how the world does things, and how we need to be careful of adopting the worldly ways into our own Christian lives.

[4:14] I want to start out by asking, or at least stating an observation related to all of our lives.

And that is this, that we are all building something. We're all building something. We are building families.

We are building home renovations. We're completing home renovations. I've been like Ty Pennington at our house with our kitchen. Praise the Lord, we have a sink again.

We're building careers. We're building our reputations. We're building our financial futures for our own household and also our future children so that they have some money laid ahead for them.

We're building relationships with one another, whether it's between friends or husbands and wives. And every one of us probably has some idea of what we hope those things will become.

[5:25] Obviously, for my home renovations, I hope that those things would be done eventually, and so did my wife. Many times she mentioned to me, when will this be done?

We, you know, we think about ministry. Like, why are we doing what we're doing? Well, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, that's why we're doing it. These are hopeful things.

And so the obvious question is, what are you building? What comes to your mind when I ask you that, what you're building?

Now, that's an obvious question, but there is a danger with that question. Because we usually evaluate what we are building solely upon the means of our intentions.

We're only building because what we're intending upon accomplishing. Like, I'm trying to build my career so I can provide for my family or protect my family or maybe even create something secure and stable for my family or for me.

[6:39] And the passage today is going to expose how dangerously incomplete that single analysis can be when we're just solely considering our intentions as to why we're building and what we're doing.

Because there is actually another question, a very haunting question, that we need to be asking ourselves as we're building. And you can thank me later.

I'm going to actually reserve that question until the end of the sermon of what we need to be asking when we're building. I know, I know. I got heads nodding. Sorry.

Not sorry, actually. I want to leave that question until the end. Let's consider Babylon here. Let's consider Babylon's house in this second woe between verse 9 through 11.

I'm going to break these into three separate verses, into three separate sections. I want us to see first that they build for security.

[7:50] Babylon is building for security in verse 9. And then in verse 10, God exposes what they're actually building. And then the last verse, verse 11, eventually this house itself begins to speak.

The very thing that they're building begins to speak and testifying against them. This is a fantastic, it's a stunning passage. And I think its emphasis really just reinforces that security built on sin cannot survive God's verdict.

And so the point that I want to reinforce because of that today is for us to build by faith. Because God has the final word on what we build.

Build by faith. Because God has the final word on what we build. The sermon title today is sort of just boring.

I don't know. Sin cannot make you safe. I guess that's kind of cool. Lesson two of the woes. And I'd like to break this down, as I just stated.

[9:00] And let's pray before we do this. And ask the Lord to really help us to be honest with our own hearts, with the condition of our lives.

To accept and change where we have fallen short. And maybe even to repent today of ways that we are building in worldly ways.

Let's pray. Father, we come to you and we are asking for you to speak through your word.

Father, help us to be convicted where conviction needs to be. Help us to be encouraged where encouraged needs to be. But let us be found today.

Not in our presuppositions of where we're at and what we're doing. But help us to be found, submitted to your word this morning. To your instruction to us.

[10:03] And we pray that we're able to do this by the power of the Holy Spirit. Really humbling us today. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So the first section, just thematic little markers that I think are helpful, is security is built.

And we see this in Babylon. Now, remember, the Lord is pronouncing these woes, these judgments upon Babylon. He continues with this.

And the Lord is speaking here. He's continuing with this second woe. In verse 9. Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm.

Now, this is the second of two woes, obviously. And last week, in the first woe, we saw Babylon accumulating more and more for itself.

At a surface level, we could summarize Babylon's problem as they were just greedy. They were pridefully greedy. Right?

[11:18] It says, woe to him who gets evil gain for his house. The gain itself is corrupt here.

It's corrupt. Babylon's prosperity has been built through exploitation, through plunder, through the suffering of others. Babylon cares about Babylon.

That's basically the gist of it. But by this second woe here, he takes us deeper. The Lord. Because now God tells us what Babylon intends to do with their gain.

And we get a little bit of new insight here in these woes. In the second half of verse 9, look at what it says. It gives the purpose to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm.

And obviously, when we think about nests, it really matters where a bird puts its nest. It's a simple image of security, of safety.

[12:25] Obviously, to build a nest low, you know, predators can get to it. But to build your nest on high would be a wise thing to be doing. That would provide safety from most harm, except blue jays.

Those are the brats of the birds, aren't they? They're just punks. And I'm a bird guy. I like birds. But I don't know why. But I think they're fascinating.

But to set your nest on high is simply to communicate a sense of security being established. And so we should see that Babylon is trying to construct a future that is untouchable.

Like, gloriously untouchable. Thinking about all they were accumulating in the first woe that we saw last week. Now, look at them. We see the reason.

They want to just be this powerful, untouchable nation. Hear the words from Nebuchadnezzar that would eventually give us a picture of the pride that's coming out of this passage.

[13:41] Nebuchadnezzar is the ruler of this future nation. And hear these words.

Nebuchadnezzar will say eventually, Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my power as a royal residence for the glory of my majesty?

Yeah, I think even my kids could say, He sounds prideful. And I think that's an astute observation.

He looks at Babylon and sees proof of his own power.

Proof that he is untouchable. That nothing can come against him and his kingdom. That his nest is set on high.

So, Habakkuk tells us something deeper that's happening. He had built, Babylon had built his nest on high. He believed that the heart of Babylon's power could put Babylon beyond the reach of danger.

And you see, Babylon is trying to build for itself security that only can be provided by God.

[15:04] Right? They're building for itself the security that only God can ultimately provide. What a great thing for us as a church to consider.

That's the ways of the world. And I think we likely have that same instinct. The instinct isn't necessarily bad. It's good.

It's good to lock your doors at night. Thank the Lord for some locks. There's some creepy people in the world. It's good to lock your doors.

It's good to have insurance policies. It's wise. To save money. To make plans for retirement. To protect your identities with LifeLock or whatever.

This is not a commercial. It's good to make contingency plans. It's good to make contingency plans and everything. Just because, you know, life is unexpected. But much of that can...

[16:05] And that can... Some of that can... Why is stewardship? We have to ask our hearts a very important question. When does responsibility become self-reliance?

Where is that fine line where our responsibility, I'm just being responsible, right? All of a sudden becomes just this sense of self-reliance that you might be setting your nest on high.

When does wisdom quietly become an attempt to construct a life in which we no longer are trusting the Lord anymore? I believe too many Christians spend their lives making faith unnecessary by labeling their lack of faith as being responsible.

And I just want to encourage you, this whole woe wrecked me. I started looking at everything.

I'm like, Lord, should I have done this kitchen remodel? Like, am I being disobedient? Like, analytical. And so I'm not trying to be, like, brashly harsh on us.

[17:27] This verse has done its work in me. And I want you to understand that. And it's good that it does a work in us. But I believe too many Christians spend their lives making faith unnecessary by just labeling it being responsible.

This is one of the most difficult things to confront in one another when our security becomes ultimate. And we can justify anything to protect it.

In fact, if you know the Bible, you can put Scripture verses to protect it. All the while, it's actually just faithless living. You see, Babylon had an accumulation problem in the first woe.

And in the second one, it indicates that it was rooted in evil intent to gain. And so we need to ask ourselves.

I think we need to really think about that, of where we are quietly trying to build for ourselves security that only God can ultimately provide.

[18:37] I think we need to grapple with that. Like, what happens when your savings account drops below a number that you feel safe?

Right? What happens when your job or your source of income or retirement or home or financial future feels threatened by various things?

And perhaps, even more importantly, what are you willing to compromise in order to protect those things?

I know I'm diving deep into our hearts today because it's searched me and I think that this is very important for us to consider. I mean, look at the irony.

Babylon is willing to do evil so that evil cannot happen to Babylon. They're willing to murder people so nobody can murder them.

[19:41] Isn't that ironic? That is what happens when security becomes ultimate. Remember verse 4. Babylon said, I will secure my own life.

And remember what it resolved in. But the righteous shall live by faith. And security becomes especially dangerous when we begin excusing sin in order to preserve our security.

We could do this very, very easily sometimes. Like, we can't afford to lose our job. So let's kind of just inflate a couple numbers here.

We need this income so we overlook maybe a little bit of dishonesty on our tax returns at the end of the year. Yeah, I like that hot tub.

So, yeah, a couple write-offs here. Maybe you think that I've worked so hard for this lifestyle that even going to our institute today for biblical manhood and womanhood, as we're diving into this realm of such a tangible expression of God's gifts to both men and women, and we think like, well, you know, I'm going to work two jobs, my wife's going to work, because this is our lifestyle.

[21:07] We have to continue with this image all the while while you're depriving any generosity, any form of generosity, whether it's to the local church or any missionaries around the world. Just heaping up for yourself.

Or maybe needing enough stored away before you can obey God freely. I know that there's so much more, but I hope you're seeing the heart of what I'm trying to get across to all of us.

Church, there is nothing sinful about saving money. There's nothing sinful about owning a home or planning for retirement or carrying an insurance policy or preparing wisely for a future.

Scripture commends wisdom in a lot of those situations, and it unfolds in that, and even stewardship. But wise provision can become self-reliance when our confidence shifts from the provider to what we have provided for ourselves.

The ways of the world spend their days trying to make faith unnecessary. Church, don't fall for that. It's the righteous entrust their lives to God in everything that's being built.

[22:26] Not only that, we see in this next section here, see God renders the verdict. It's not unknown to you.

We read the passage. You know where this verse is going. I've primed you for it. And we see God renders the verdict. And that's shame. That way is shame. This verse has a stunning collision between intention and outcome.

Regardless of what you intended, this is what's being produced from your intention. Babylon would say, I devise security for my house.

My nest is set on high. Right? I can quote a couple Psalms and a couple Proverbs. And God says, you devise shame for your house.

Shame. Think about how shocking that statement is. Isn't that shocking? Not many would intentionally devise shame for their house unless you're dumb, I guess.

[23:39] There's no other way of saying it. Like, why would you devise shame? It doesn't make sense. I think everyone wants to live an honorable life and be honorable before the Lord.

Even unbelievers, I think that they want to have an honorable sense of identity in the world, whether that's attached to God or not. They want to be respected. They want an epitaph on their grave that reflects something of honor.

And so, I don't think anybody would ever devise shame for their house and really actively be wanting that.

Think about that shocking statement. Like, Babylon thought it was building greatness. That Babylon was building this permanence that nothing could touch.

That they were building a very protected and promising future. And God looks upon that entire project and says, you have been planning your own shame.

[24:44] That's pretty shocking. Don't we often evaluate our decisions by what we intended?

That's not what I intended to mean, but that's what you're doing, right?

It's when we try to take our intentions and separate them from the outcomes in life. But here we're reminded that God sees what those decisions are actually producing, regardless of intention.

Good intentions cannot make sinful means holy. Good intentions cannot make sinful means holy.

Consider Proverbs 15, 27. Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own households. Babylon believes the gain will establish the house.

And wisdom says the gain will actually trouble the house. And then verse 10 actually resolves it in making things very, very morally difficult.

[25:49] How they're doing this. It says by cutting off many peoples. Obviously, we wouldn't be surprised that a wicked nation secures their future by robbing other people of their future.

Yeah, that makes sense in a wicked world and wicked ways and wicked means and everything like that. And we see that this type of gain is the antonym of the expression of living by faith, isn't it?

Complete antonym. As God says, you have forfeited your life. You're cutting off many people, but you're forfeiting your life. What irony.

God's declaring you are destroying the very thing that you're trying to preserve. Remember Proverbs 119, unjust gain takes away the life of its possessors.

You see, sin has a way of making us destroy the very thing that we're trying to preserve. Sin has a way of destroying us.

[27:03] And destroying the very thing that we're trying to preserve. I love this quote from Puritan Thomas Watson. He says very clearly. Imagine a Puritan saying things very clearly. He says, Sin has the devil for its father, shame for its companion, and death for its wages.

That's literally verse 10. Babylon built its whole life around saving itself. And God says that road ends in forfeiture of life, of their life.

And if that is what you believe today, don't forfeit your life, but receive new life by your faith in Jesus Christ.

Consider the contrast with the good news of the gospel. Babylon takes the lives of others to secure itself. But look at what Christ did as a model, an archetype of how we ought to live.

Jesus gives his life to secure his people. What a beautiful gospel message. The worldly ways have nothing for us.

[28:22] We have everything that we need in Jesus Christ. Christ. This is a great opportunity for you to turn from your sin and cling to him. If you are not in Jesus Christ today, the only place is found, and the only place life is found, rather, is in the arms of Jesus Christ.

And it's yours today by simply having faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. To build your life upon, not your own righteousness in your own ways, but the righteousness of Christ.

That is available for you today by your faith. I hope that you take that. The last section, we see something absolutely remarkable happen.

The house supplies the witnesses in verse 11. In verse 11, we see, for the stone will cry out from the wall and the beam from the woodwork respond.

You get this worship service. You get this, like, funeral crying within the house of Babylon between, obviously, the metaphors.

[29:34] This woe meets its metaphorical climax here in this picture. The house of Babylon starts talking, and no, you're not tripping. The house is talking.

Do you see it? A stone cries out from the wall, and a beam from the woodwork answers it. Do you see it? Do you hear it?

The very structure built as evidence of Babylon's greatness of that nest set on high now becomes evidence against the builder.

Picture it. Like, really picture it. Every stone has a history, even in your own house.

Every beam has a story. Every piece of that great house knows what it costs to put it there.

[30 : 37] Babylon can silence victims, continue to accumulate, destroy records, rewrite history altogether, and tell everyone, look at what we accomplished.

But God says, even if no one can speak as to how vile and shameful that nation is, the walls will. Everything they're building will eventually testify against them. This has a powerful resonance with the beginning of Habakkuk.

Remember Habakkuk? Wasn't he one of those crying out at the beginning of this series? Crying out to God because of violence, of injustice?

And now in verse 11, even the stones are crying out with him. Now the point isn't that Habakkuk himself is literally one of these stones. I don't think that's it, but the picture is that injustice leaves witnesses.

[31 : 42] It leaves witnesses. And they're not just in like a certain place in time and in history. Literally, it unfolds as history continues. Everywhere.

Even though its victims may be long gone and silenced. How? Because even where victims have been silenced, God has not become blind.

Even when, where nobody seems to be able to speak, God has not become deaf. Evil may escape human accountability.

And we may look, turn on the news, and think that that is happening right now, but how foolish we can actually believe that in our day today. Evil may escape human accountability for a season, but it never escapes the knowledge of God.

the very thing that is built by sinful means and shameful intentions will ultimately be vindicated by God someday.

[32 : 56] Man. Church, if the things that we have built in our lives could speak, if the things I've built in my life could speak, what would they say about how we built them?

Hmm? What would your career say about that? What would your marriage say? What would your children say?

What would your bank account say? Any ministry leaders, or whether present or former, what would ministry say?

What would your reputation say? Would they testify that they were built through faith, through integrity, through sacrifice, through patience, I'm upsetting a child.

Would they testify that they've trusted in God and they were built by trusting in God? Or would something inside the walls begin to cry out? For your career, they would yell, liar.

[34 : 16] For your marriage, they would yell out, selfish. For your children, the household you're building for your children, they would say, abandonment.

Wow. For your bank account, they would say, hoarder. For ministry, they would say, hypocrite. For your reputation, they would say, fraud.

What is built through sin eventually bears witness to the sin that built it. Babylon thought the walls testified, look how secure we are, but God says, those same walls will testify, look what cost to build us.

Every sinful structure eventually tells the story of its foundation. Every sinful structure. And I think we need to stand back at this moment to see this progression.

Look at, follow this house one last time. Stand back, look at verse 9 through 11 in your Bible. In verse 9, Babylon looks at what it is building and says, security.

[35 : 29] They're gathering, they're building, they're fortifying, setting their nest on high because they believe that they're constructing a future where nothing can touch them. And then in verse 10, God looks at the exact same house and gives it a completely different name.

He says, you have devised shame for your house. And so standing back, Babylon says, security. And God says, shame. Babylon says, we are preserving our lives, but God says, you are forfeiting them.

And then in verse 11, see it? The house itself takes the witness stand, the stone cries out, the beams answer, and everything Babylon built begins testifying that God's assessment was right all along.

And church, I think this, that brings us to the question of this text that we really need to be asking ourselves. There's a better question to be asking, not simply, what am I building?

Right? Because Babylon knew what they were building. Not simply, by why am I building it?

Because Babylon had intentions that it could explain.

[36:47] not even simply, does what I am building look successful? Is it working? Is it functionally, logically working? Because Babylon was extraordinarily successful, weren't they?

Here's the question that we need to be asking, church. What does God say about what I am building? What does God say about what I am building?

That has frightened me this week. Haunted me this week. What does God say about the marriage I am building?

The family I am building? The career I am building? Reputation I am building? The ministry, the life that I am building?

And if the answer comes and disgruntles you about what you're building, will you actually listen to the answer?

[37:59] Because if it is actually self-reliance masked in being responsible, will you change?

When you ask that question, what does God say about what I'm building? Will you actually listen at the answer? Security built on sin cannot survive God's verdict.

So you see the point, build by faith because God has the final word on what we build. What does God say about what I am building? Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray.