

Pride & Babylon

Habakkuk 2:1-8

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Habakkuk 2:1-8

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. ² Then the Lord replied: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.” ³ For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. ⁴ “See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness— ⁵ indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples. ⁶ “Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, “Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?” ⁷ Will not your creditors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their prey. ⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed human blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

v1 – What would Habakkuk do after asking God his questions?

And watch to see what He will say to me: He anticipated an answer from God and was willing to **watch** — that is, *wait* for it.

- Often when we question God we don’t expect Him to answer, but Habakkuk did.
- Other times we not only *expect* God will answer, but we *demand* that He answer, and answer according to our schedule.
- Habakkuk approached this with the correct attitude.

How do we know Habakkuk’s attitude was right?

And what I will answer when I am corrected: Because he *expected* God to correct him. Habakkuk didn’t ask God this question because he thought God was wrong and had to explain Himself. He asked it because he knew that he was wrong and he needed to be corrected.

- His questions were his invitation to God saying, “God, I don’t understand what you are doing, but I know that you are right in all things. Please speak to me and correct me.”

v2 – Why did God want Habakkuk to record the revelation?

God told Habakkuk to record this “question and answer” for the benefit of others; **that he may run who reads it.**

- Habakkuk’s revelation wasn’t just for himself, but also to strengthen others. Those who read it couldn’t make progress if it was not made plain.

Why did God want Habakkuk to make the vision plain?

that he may run who reads it. It doesn’t say, “that he who runs may read it,” but “**that he may run who reads it.**” The *running* — the activity and progress — comes forth from God’s word.

- Understanding God’s Word should result in action.

v3 – For whom was the revelation to be written?

For the vision is yet for an appointed time: Habakkuk spoke to an age beyond his own. The Babylonian conquest would not be evident in his day, but in the future.

v4 – How is the proud contrasted with the righteous?

The righteous will live by being faithful to God; the proud will not be faithful to God.

Why does the NIV substitute the word enemy for proud?

When you read on, it is clear this is specifically talking about Babylon who would certainly be to Israel a relevant example of the proud.

- Habakkuk wondered why Babylon — a nation even more sinful than Judah — would be used to bring judgment against Judah. In answering the prophet, God first assured him that He saw **the proud**, and knew that **his soul is not upright in him.**

How is pride seen everywhere?

- The rich man is proud of what he has.
 - The poor man is proud of his “honor” in having less.
- The talented man is proud of what he can do.
 - The man of few talents is proud of his hard work.
- The religious man is proud of his religion.
 - The unbeliever is proud of his unbelief.
- The establishment man is proud of his place in society.
 - The counter-cultural man is proud of his “outcast” status.
- The learned man is proud of his knowledge and credentials.
 - The simple man is proud of his simplicity.

How can pride be especially dangerous among the people of God?

Once a man came to John Bunyan after a sermon and told him what a fine sermon he preached. “You’re too late,” Bunyan answered. “The devil told me that before I stepped down from the pulpit.”

- Satan can tell the praying brother to be proud of his ability to pray, the growing brother to be proud of his growth, and even the humble brother to be proud of his humility.

What is pride?

1 John 2:16 – *For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*

Pride is anything that is “of the world,” which leads to arrogance, showing off, pride in self, presumption, and boasting.

What is the distinction between *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*?

Eve was tempted by the serpent to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

- Eve coveted the fruit in three ways: it was “good for food,” “pleasing to the eye,” and “desirable for gaining wisdom” (Genesis 3:6).

How is the pride of life especially sinful?

Eve exhibited the pride of life by thinking eating the fruit would make her “*like God, knowing good and evil.*” So, the pride of life is anything that exalts us above our station and offers the illusion of God-like qualities, causing us to boast in arrogance and worldly wisdom.

- Eve wanted to be like God in her knowledge, not content to live in a perfect world under His perfect grace and care for her.

- This was the very sin that resulted in Satan’s expulsion from heaven. He desired to be God, not to be a servant of God (Isaiah 14:12-15).

How does Satan use *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* as temptations?

Satan tried these same three temptations on Christ during His 40 days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

- He tempted Jesus with the lust of the flesh, bread for His hunger (vv. 2-3),
- the lust of the eyes, “*all the kingdoms of the world with their splendor*” (vv. 8-9),
- and the pride of life, daring Him to cast Himself from the roof of the Temple to prove that He was the Messiah in a display of power that was not in the will of God (vv. 5-6).

But Jesus, though He was “*tempted in every way, just as we are*” (Hebrews 4:15), resisted the devil and used the Word of God to ensure victory over him.

- Christians have to deal with the same three temptations Eve and Jesus experienced. Satan doesn’t change his methods; he doesn’t have to because they continue to be successful.

How are tempted today by *the lust of the flesh*?

Satan tempts us with sexual gratification, gluttony, excessive alcohol consumption, and drugs. And there are also the “*deeds of the flesh*” we are warned about...

Galatians 5:19-21 – *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.*

How are tempted today by *the lust of the eyes*?

Satan tempts us with the lust of the eyes—the endless accumulation of “stuff” with an insatiable desire for more, better, and newer possessions. This ensnares us and hardens our hearts to the things of God.

How are tempted today by *the pride of life*?

The arrogant boasting which constitutes the pride of life motivates the other two lusts as it seeks to elevate itself above all others and fulfill all personal desires.

- It is the root cause of strife in families, churches, and nations.
- It exalts the self in direct contradiction to Jesus’ statement that those who would follow Him must take up their cross and deny themselves.
- The pride of life stands in our way if we truly seek to be servants of God.
- It is the arrogance that separates us from others and limits our effectiveness in the kingdom.

How should we respond to the accolades for our accomplishments?

We should give the glory to Him who it is due...

2 Cor 10:17 – *he who glories, let him glory in the Lord*

When we do great things, it is because God gifted us with talent and opportunity to accomplish what we have done.

- To God alone be the glory!

How is it *the just shall live by his faith*?

In contrast to **the proud**, there are **the just**. The principle of their life is **faith**, instead of pride that looks to self. True **faith** looks outside of self unto the LORD God, while pride always looks to self.

What is the significance of the just living by faith?

This brief statement from the prophet Habakkuk is one of the most important, and most quoted Old Testament statements in the New Testament. Paul used it to show that the **just** live **by faith**, not by law. Being under the law isn't the way to be found **just** before God, only living by faith is.

- Romans 1:17 is the commentary on the justified man — “The just shall live by faith.”
- Hebrews 10:38 is the commentary on faith — “The just shall live by faith.”
- Galatians 3:11 is the commentary on the Christian life — “The just shall live by faith.”

How do we have faith?

Faith is a gift of God to those who believe Jesus...

Ephesians 2:8-9 – *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Our saving faith grows as a result of our relationship with the Lord. As we take steps of faith in lesser matters, God reinforces that faith with even more trust in Him.

How is a person declared just by God?

To be *approved* before God, you have to have done it by a relationship of **faith**. If your life is all about living under the law, then God does not find you approved.

What role did Habakkuk 2:4 have in the Protestant Reformation?

Before his bold declaration of the gospel, Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk who went on a pilgrimage to Rome. One day he came to the church with a staircase said to be from Pilate's judgment hall. It was the custom of pilgrims to climb this staircase on their knees, saying prayers and kissing the steps where it was thought the blood of Jesus fell.

- Luther starting doing just as all the pilgrims, but remembered the words: *The just will live by his faith*. It

is said that when he remembered this he stopped, stood up, walked down and returned to Germany.

- Some say the Reformation began on those stairs.

What do people live by if not by faith?

We are called to live by faith, and nothing else.

- Some Christians live by devotions.
- Some Christians live by works.
- Some Christians live by feelings.
- Some Christians live by circumstances.

Each of these is meaningless and perhaps *dangerous* without faith.

v5 – What do the proud (or the enemy, Babylon) do?

The proud are betrayed by getting drunk or otherwise medicating themselves in order to escape from reality.

Why is the proud never satisfied?

The proud man cannot be satisfied because they are trying to get by outside the will of God. The only sure way to be satisfied is to be declared just by faith.

How is it the proud *takes captive all the peoples*?

The proud thinks they can be satisfied by having power over other people. This is why we have slavery, oppression and wars.

- Certainly, Babylon as proud people did this as well.

v6-7 – What else characterizes the proud?

They eventually become the object of ridicule and scorn due to their robbery and extortion. Those who've loaned to them will demand payment and enslave them.

Prov 22:7 – *the borrower is servant to the lender*

v8 – What would become of the proud Babylonians?

God assured Habakkuk that He knew how to deal with nations like Babylon. He promised the Babylonians that just as they **plundered many nations**, so one day others would **plunder** them.

- The Babylonians were perfect examples of the proud who set themselves against those who are declared just by faith — and Habakkuk could take comfort in the fact that God would deal with them.

Proverbs 16:18 – *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- Pride is the root of all sin; it separates us from God
- The just live by faith which is an active relationship with the Savior.
- Being proud never ends well.