

Look at **Hab. 2:5-20** from the NLB: **“Wealth [or Wine] is treacherous, & the arrogant are never at rest. They open their mouths as wide as the grave, and like death, they are never satisfied. In their greed they have gathered up many nations and swallowed many peoples. But the time is coming when all their captives will taunt them, saying, ‘[Woe to] you thieves! At last justice has caught up with you! Now you will get what you deserve for your oppression and extortion!’ Suddenly, your debtors will rise up in anger. They will turn on you and take all you have, while you stand trembling and helpless. You have plundered many nations; now they will plunder you. You murderers! You have filled the countryside with violence and all the cities, too (:5-8).**

**How terrible it will be for you [or woe to those] who get rich by unjust means! You believe your wealth will buy security; putting your families beyond the reach of danger. But by the murders you have committed, you have shamed your name & forfeited your lives. The very stones in the walls of your houses cry out against you, and the beams in the ceilings echo the complaint (:9-11).**

**How terrible it will be for you [or woe to those] who build cities with money gained by murder and corruption! Has not Yahweh Almighty promised that the wealth of nations will turn to ashes? They work so hard, but all in vain! For the time will come when all the earth will be filled, as the waters fill the sea, with an awareness of the glory of Yahweh (:12-14).**

**How terrible it will be for you [or woe to those] who make your neighbors drunk! You force your cup on them so that you can gloat over their nakedness and shame. But soon it will be your turn! Come, drink and be exposed! Drink from the cup of Yahweh’s judgment, and all your glory will be turned to shame. You cut down the forests of Lebanon. Now you will be cut down! You terrified the wild animals you caught in your traps. Now terror will strike you because of your murder and violence in cities everywhere (:15-17)!**

**What have you gained by worshipping all your man-made idols? How foolish to trust in something made by your own hands! What fools you are to believe such lies! How terrible it will be for you [or woe to those] who beg lifeless wooden idols to save you. You ask speechless stone images to tell you what to do. Can an idol speak for God? They may be overlaid with gold and silver, but they are lifeless inside. But Yahweh is in His holy Temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him (:18-20).”**

Reading these verses makes one feel like he should put on a robe and sandals and act like an Old Testament prophet: “Woe to you!” Today we’re going to take a look at pride and its consequences. C. S. Lewis says that pride is the greatest sin, that all other sins stem from this one. What’s wrong with pride? The proud person wants to be in control. He is stuck in self-centeredness; he thinks he doesn’t need God; he thinks he can handle life in his own strength; he is blind to his own sin. What it really means is that he doesn’t trust God for life; he tries to find it another way. He tries to get fame, fortune, power, or pleasure in a myriad of ways. Apart from God, one of those four flesh patterns is what we tend to live for and by. Habakkuk is a prophet with questions, troubling questions. “How long, O Yahweh, will I call for help and You won’t answer? Why do You make me see sin? Why are You silent? Why are You inactive?” God finally answers Habakkuk’s questions with,

“I’m going to do something about My disobedient people. I’m going to use the vicious, aggressive, savage Chaldeans to judge and correct them.”

Now Habakkuk *really* has a problem because he can’t figure out how an everlasting, personal, sovereign, holy, faithful, almighty God can use such wicked people to judge and correct His own. Now his questions include: “Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? This doesn’t seem consistent with Your character. I’ll watch and wait for Your answer.” Yahweh answered, “Write out My answer so all can read it. I’ll carry out My word. The Chaldeans will be dealt with, at exactly the right time. As for the proud, they trust in themselves and are *soul-sick*. As for the faithful, they trust in Me and *live!*”

The proud, their downfall, and why are clarified in **2:6-20**. The faithful, their lives, and why are portrayed in **3:1-19**. These verses of **2:6-20** describe the *opposite* of the man/woman of faith. The fate of the proud one is that a song of derision & denunciation will be sung against him, cursing him with 5 woes according to his sins. In terms of these “woes”, just as pride takes many forms, so does its consequences. Often the consequences are similar to the sins!

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**:6-8** WOE AGAINST COERCION. TRYING TO GET FAME, FORTUNE, POWER, OR PLEASURE BY OVERPOWERING, CONTROLLING, INTIMIDATING, BLOODY GREED. **:6** “Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him, even mockery and insinuations against him and say, ‘Woe to him who increases what is not his—for how long—and makes himself rich with loans?’ **:7** Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, and those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them. **:8** Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will loot you—because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.” The Chaldeans enriched themselves at the expense of others; they shed blood just for the sheer love of conquering. “You are bullies, abusers, you think fighting is the way to get your way. Woe to you!”

**:6** All the victims of the injustices will respond with a taunt-song, a song in the form of riddles, the real meaning hidden by using words which have a two-fold sense. The Chaldeans were (not occasionally but) continually seizing by force that which was not theirs. “Woe to you. You’ll reap what you are sowing. Sin has consequences. Woe to you for making yourself rich with loans, exacting heavy taxation of the conquered nations, lending on the poorest of terms. **:7** “Your creditors (literally biters) will unexpectedly strike back; they’ll awaken. And they’ll violently shake you. They’ll give you aggressors

a good shakedown. You were plundering as you went; you'll become plunder for them. You took away from somebody. Somebody else will take away from you." In 70 years, Medo-Persia became that nation who took away from the Chaldeans. :8 "Your victims will turn on you and take all you have. Why? Because you're murderers, and, you've filled both the countryside and the cities with violence. You've unjustly acquired wealth, acquired by extortion and plunder, and more seriously, there's been the wholesale destruction of people and their lands in the pursuit of this wealth. Woe to you for your aggression, your enriching yourself at the expense of others. Woe to you!"

:9-11 WOE AGAINST ABUSE. TRYING TO GET FAME, FORTUNE, POWER, OR PLEASURE BY WRONGFUL GAIN, PREMEDITATED EXPLOITATION, MAKING DECISIONS BY WHAT WE 'COVET' OR THINK WE NEED. :9 **"Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity! :10 You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples; so you are sinning against yourself. :11 Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework."**

The Chaldeans were willing to cheat, compromise, give up anything to get what they wanted. :9 They wanted that which did not belong to them; why? So they could put themselves out of the reach of harm, like an eagle that feels its nest is impregnable, unconquerable. The city of Babylon was protected by its huge wall more than 85 feet thick and 11 miles long. But it had been built with the spoils of conquest. Woe to you! :10-11 "It was a shameful thing for you to do, cutting off so many peoples. By your killing, you shamed yourselves. You are sinning against your souls; you've forfeited your lives. In the trial against you that will eventually bring the death penalty, the very stones and lumber will testify against you. Woe to you for your wrongful gain, premeditated exploitation, and covetousness. Shame, you've sinned against yourselves. Woe to you!"

:12-14 WOE AGAINST VIOLENCE. TRYING TO GET FAME, FORTUNE, POWER, OR PLEASURE BY UNJUSTLY-GOTTEN GAIN, OR RATIONALIZING OUR SELFISH WAYS, WANTING OUR OWN GLORY TO BE KNOWN. :12 **"Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence! :13 Is it not indeed from Yahweh of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing?"** They were building with the blood and sweat of the conquered. :12 Babylon deported entire nations to build. Slave labor built Babylon's magnificent palaces, costly temples, the grand processional street, hanging gardens! But Yahweh was unimpressed by Babylon's grandeur. He saw only the blood of the people who were conquered in ruthless warfare in order to obtain the means. :13 It is from Yahweh of armies, His sovereign rule as Commander over every created thing, that all your labor shall have no purpose other than to be food for the fire. "Your buildings are built only to come to nothing. You grow weary for nothing! All your work is a waste because it was brought about with bloodshed and violence. You think you're right in what you're doing, but it's a waste, empty, nothing. God will have no trouble with your 85 feet thick walls, grand streets, huge buildings, hanging gardens. Woe to you!" "Woe to you when you think you're independent, that

you don't need God (that you're the center of your world, that it's all about you), when you're only trying to reveal your own glory. Woe to you for building your cities with the blood of the conquered. Woe to you!"

:14 **For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea.** *Here* in this verse we see what the earth should and will be filled with—the knowledge of *the glory of Yahweh!* This knowledge will be in overflowing abundance, like the waters fill the sea. God will triumph, the tide of evil will be stopped, and the knowledge of Yahweh will flourish. The destruction of Babylon will reveal Yahweh's glory; His greater glory will be known throughout the world. God's final program has room for only one Sovereign—Himself! His splendor, character, life, nature, heart, essence revealed—everywhere. "Woe to you who think the glory belongs to yourselves." While this immediately refers to the destruction of the Chaldeans, we're also given a glimpse down the road of the glorious millennial kingdom of God here on earth when Jesus reigns (Num. 14:21, Ps. 72:19, Is. 6:3, 11:9, here). This is who life is all about—Yahweh!

:15-17 WOE AGAINST HEARTLESSNESS. TRYING TO GET FAME, FORTUNE, POWER, OR PLEASURE BY HUMILIATION, TREATING PEOPLE AS THINGS TO BE USED. :15 **"Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk so as to look on their nakedness! :16 You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup in Yahweh's right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace will come upon your glory. :17 For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants."** The humiliation of the conquered, to those who use alcohol as a prelude to perversion.

:15 "You make your neighbors drunk by alcohol and poison so you can look on their nakedness. You get them drunk, making them behave shamefully and become easy prey. Not only are you drinking yourself (2:5), but you're also making drunkards of others, leading to a breakdown of morals, which leads to gross immorality. Alcohol! Drugs! Sex! Using people! Woe to you!"

:16 You'll reap a corresponding judgment. "You'll be filled with disgrace, extreme contempt, rather than honor. You'll be lying naked in your own vomit, dead drunk. You'll be covered with shame. Divine retribution will be served by Yahweh's powerful right hand. Utter disgrace (emphatic!), involving vomit and disgrace, will come upon your imagined glory." Treating one person like this is as bad as treating a nation like this. :17 Lebanon, to the north of Israel, was known for its abundance of trees and animal life. "You took away her cedars, you cruelly mistreated the animals, you shed the blood of whole countries and cities. You abused God's creation for your selfish purposes. You exploited trees, animals, people. You were destructive of all forms of life. Woe to you!"

:18-20 WOE AGAINST IDOLATRY. TRYING TO GET FAME, FORTUNE, POWER, OR PLEASURE BY PUTTING TRUST IN SOMEONE OR SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE BIBLICAL GOD, BY THINKING THAT THE FORCES WE'VE MADE OR DISCOVERED

ARE ABLE TO GIVE US LIFE AND FULFILL OUR DESIRES.

**:18 “What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. :19 Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’ To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’ And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it.**

These verses describe the real cause of their eventual destruction: turning to an idol instead of turning to the living God. “You whose god is your strength (1:11). How foolish! Woe to you for not living by faith in Yahweh, the true God. You trust in yourselves and are soul-sick. :18 “If you’ve carved it out of wood or hewn it from stone, if you’ve made an image by melting metal and casting it into the shape of your choice, how do these help you? Why would you trust in something you created, when it’s speechless? Don’t commit yourself to idols that humanity has set up—science, technology, education, finances, athletics, human beings, fame, fortune, power, pleasure. Anything you give yourself to, anything that takes all of you is what you worship. It’s a creation of your own imagination! :19 “Woe to you! How foolish to worship the work of your own hand. ‘Wood, awake!’ ‘Stone, arise!’ *These* things teach you? Don’t be ridiculous! Dead, helpless blocks of wood and metal, *these* your teachers? They can’t give aid or instruction. They can’t help you even if encased in gold and silver. There’s no breath at all in them.” The wicked are doomed because the gods they serve are worthless. And we as Christians have the tendency to think, “Give it to them, God! We agree, ‘Woe to them!’” But what about when we don’t trust Him, when we operate by pride? This makes it personal! This warning includes each of us.

**:20 But Yahweh is in His holy temple, let all the earth be silent before HIM!** But—a striking contrast with the nothingness of idols. From man-carved idols, the attention shifts to Yahweh, the One who is, the self-existent One; He will be there because He is Yahweh, the true, living, holy God reigning from heaven. God is ruling in sovereign power; He knows what the Judeans are doing. He knows what the Chaldeans are doing. He knows what’s going on in each of our lives. He will do right, at the right time. He has a plan; He’ll work it out. Before the all-wise, all-powerful God, silence! Shhh! Quiet submission to Him! Yahweh’s glory will yet fill the earth; Yahweh is in His holy temple. Let us keep silent before Him. Let us trust Him, in firm confidence that His ways are best, even when we can’t understand them. All we’ll want to do on that day is focus on our Yahweh and be silent before Him. It is time for Habakkuk’s questioning to be silenced. “Hush! Be quiet!” Yahweh inspires profound silence. If not, we don’t know or understand Him as He is! Let’s not dictate to Him; let’s be silent before Him. “Woe to us if we give our lives to anyone or anything else.”

Let’s wrap up all these verses. The aggressive person will be destroyed by his/her own aggressiveness. The greedy person will try to reach too far and lose everything. The violent person will turn people in violence against him/her. The inhumane person will drink from Yahweh’s cup of retribution

and find disgrace covering his/her glory. The idolatrous person will trust his/her own creation and end up with no help or instruction. It’s Yahweh’s glory which should and will fill the earth; it’s Yahweh and no one else who is in His holy temple. Let us be silent (shh!) before Him. Let us trust Him.

Woe to us if we place our trust in any power or system other than God Himself, if we trust any idol mankind may set up (United Nations, NATO, a system of government, a political party, technology, laws, education, sports or movie or music stars, the size of your bank account, your job position, your popularity, your peer group, your degree, etc.). Woe to us if we’re guilty of replacing God with ourselves or another or a thing. It all begins by not trusting God; it results in pride. The righteous will live by his/her faith (2:4).

Maybe there’s someone reading this who: physically is abusive, is trying to control, is the god of your little world, who is trying to run his/her life by what he/she wants: “I’ll do whatever it takes to get it.” A person who uses people to get his/her own way is selfishly expecting others to serve him; is trying to become famous, popular; is worshipping someone or something other than the Biblical God. Woe to you! Turn to the God of **2:4,14,20**, and **3:1-19**.

Let’s close by reading Habakkuk’s trusting words in **3:16-19**. This is the righteous walk of faith!

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**:15 "Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make *them* drunk so as to look on their nakedness! :16 You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your *own* nakedness. The cup in Yahweh's right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace *will come upon your glory*. :17 For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of *its* beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants."** The humiliation of the conquered, to those who use alcohol as a prelude to perversion.

**:15** "You make your neighbors drunk by alcohol and poison so you can look on their nakedness. You get them drunk, making them behave shamefully and become easy prey. Not only are you drinking yourself (**2:5**), but you're also making drunkards of others, leading to a breakdown of morals, which leads to gross immorality. Alcohol! Drugs! Sex! Using people! Woe to you!"

**:16** You'll reap a corresponding judgment. "You'll be filled with disgrace, extreme contempt, rather than honor. You'll be lying naked in your own vomit, dead drunk. You'll be covered with shame. Divine retribution will be served by Yahweh's powerful right hand. Utter disgrace (emphatic!), involving vomit and disgrace, will come upon your imagined glory." Treating one person like this is as bad as treating a nation like this. **:17** Lebanon, to the north of Israel, was known for its abundance of trees and animal life. "You took away her cedars, you cruelly mistreated the animals, you shed the blood of whole countries and cities. You abused God's creation for your selfish purposes. You exploited trees, animals, people. You were destructive of all forms of life. Woe to you!"

**:18-20 WOE AGAINST IDOLATRY.** TRYING TO GET FAME, FORTUNE, POWER, OR PLEASURE BY PUTTING TRUST IN SOMEONE OR SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE BIBLICAL GOD, BY THINKING THAT THE FORCES WE'VE MADE OR DISCOVERED

ARE ABLE TO GIVE US LIFE AND FULFILL OUR DESIRES.

**:18 “What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. :19 Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’ To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’ And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it.**

These verses describe the real cause of their eventual destruction: turning to an idol instead of turning to the living God. “You whose god is your strength (1:11). How foolish! Woe to you for not living by faith in Yahweh, the true God. You trust in yourselves and are soul-sick. :18 “If you’ve carved it out of wood or hewn it from stone, if you’ve made an image by melting metal and casting it into the shape of your choice, how do these help you? Why would you trust in something you created, when it’s speechless? Don’t commit yourself to idols that humanity has set up—science, technology, education, finances, athletics, human beings, fame, fortune, power, pleasure. Anything you give yourself to, anything that takes all of you is what you worship. It’s a creation of your own imagination! :19 “Woe to you! How foolish to worship the work of your own hand. ‘Wood, awake!’ ‘Stone, arise!’ *These* things teach you? Don’t be ridiculous! Dead, helpless blocks of wood and metal, *these* your teachers? They can’t give aid or instruction. They can’t help you even if encased in gold and silver. There’s no breath at all in them.” The wicked are doomed because the gods they serve are worthless. And we as Christians have the tendency to think, “Give it to them, God! We agree, ‘Woe to them!’” But what about when *we* don’t trust Him, when *we* operate by pride? This makes it personal! This warning includes each of us.

**:20 But Yahweh is in His holy temple, let all the earth be silent before HIM!** But—a striking contrast with the nothingness of idols. From man-carved idols, the attention shifts to Yahweh, the One who is, the self-existent One; He will be there because He is Yahweh, the true, living, holy God reigning from heaven. God is ruling in sovereign power; He knows what the Judeans are doing. He knows what the Chaldeans are doing. He knows what’s going on in each of our lives. He will do right, at the right time. He has a plan; He’ll work it out. Before the all-wise, all-powerful God, silence! Shhh! Quiet submission to Him! Yahweh’s glory will yet fill the earth; Yahweh is in His holy temple. Let us keep silent before Him. Let us trust Him, in firm confidence that His ways are best, even when we can’t understand them. All we’ll want to do on that day is focus on our Yahweh and be silent before Him. It is time for Habakkuk’s questioning to be silenced. “Hush! Be quiet!” Yahweh inspires profound silence. If not, we don’t know or understand Him as He is! Let’s not dictate to Him; let’s be silent before Him. “Woe to us if we give our lives to anyone or anything else.”

Let’s wrap up all these verses. The aggressive person will be destroyed by his/her own aggressiveness. The greedy person will try to reach too far and lose everything. The violent person will turn people in violence against him/her. The inhumane person will drink from Yahweh’s cup of retribution

and find disgrace covering his/her glory. The idolatrous person will trust his/her own creation and end up with no help or instruction. It's Yahweh's glory which should and will fill the earth; it's Yahweh and no one else who is in His holy temple. Let us be silent (shh!) before Him. Let us trust Him.

Woe to us if we place our trust in any power or system other than God Himself, if we trust any idol mankind may set up (United Nations, NATO, a system of government, a political party, technology, laws, education, sports or movie or music stars, the size of your bank account, your job position, your popularity, your peer group, your degree, etc.). Woe to us if we're guilty of replacing God with ourselves or another or a thing. It all begins by not trusting God; it results in pride. The righteous will live by his/her faith (**2:4**).

Maybe there's someone reading this who: physically is abusive, is trying to control, is the god of your little world, who is trying to run his/her life by what he/she wants: "I'll do whatever it takes to get it." A person who uses people to get his/her own way is selfishly expecting others to serve him; is trying to become famous, popular; is worshipping someone or something other than the Biblical God. Woe to you! Turn to the God of **2:4,14,20**, and **3:1-19**.

Let's close by reading Habakkuk's trusting words in **3:16-19**. This is the righteous walk of faith!