

Minor Prophets, Major Problems: When What I See Challenges What I Believe

Overview

This message marks the start of a new TFC Youth series exploring the "minor prophets"—not minor in importance, but simply in the length of their biblical books. The focus this week is on Habakkuk, a prophet who wrestled deeply with the question: If God is good, why do bad things happen? The teaching encourages honest faith, mature wrestling with doubt, and trust in God's sovereignty even when answers are incomplete.

Keywords: Habakkuk, Faith and Doubt, God's Sovereignty

Key Takeaways

- **Honest Questioning is Faith:** Habakkuk's candid questions demonstrate that wrestling with doubt is a vital part of mature faith.
- **God Uses Evil Without Causing It:** God permits human free will and can use evil actions for His purposes without being the source of evil.
- **Trust Amid Unanswered Questions:** Faith involves trusting God's character and plan even when answers and timing remain unclear.
- **Free Will and Its Tension:** Free will allows genuine love and relationship with God but also enables evil and suffering.

Key Themes & Insights

1. The Struggles of the Minor Prophets

- Minor prophets like Habakkuk faced immense challenges and questions.
- Their books, though short, are packed with raw, honest wrestling with God about injustice and suffering.

2. Habakkuk's Honest Questions

- Habakkuk ministered during a time of violence and spiritual decline in Judah.
- He was known as the "questioning prophet" for his candid dialogue with God, asking why God seemed silent amid so much suffering.
- The prophet's questions mirror those many believers have today: "If God is good, why is there so much evil?"

3. Is It Okay to Question God?

- There can be cultural and religious stigma against questioning God, but Habakkuk's example shows it is not a lack of faith to ask hard questions.
- Faith is not the absence of questions, but knowing where to take them—directly to God with honesty and a desire to understand.

4. God's Challenging Answer

- God responds to Habakkuk by revealing that He will use the Babylonians—a nation even more violent—to judge Judah.
- This answer raises deeper questions: How can a holy God use an unholy nation? Is God responsible for evil?

5. Wrestling with God's Sovereignty and Human Free Will

- God can use evil without being the source of evil.
- Babylon's violence was their own choice; God allowed and used it, but did not cause it.
- Human freedom is central: God does not force evil, but permits choices (good or bad), setting boundaries and ultimately using them for His purposes.
- Scripture (James 1:13) affirms that God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.

6. The Tension of Free Will

- We cherish free will, yet often wish God would override it to prevent suffering.
- Removing free will would make us robots, not genuine lovers or followers of God.
- The same freedom that allows us to love God also allows for evil and suffering.

7. God's Justice and the Bigger Picture

- God holds evil accountable and works toward justice, correction, rescue, and redemption—even if it doesn't happen on our timeline or in ways we expect.
- Sometimes, God's answers and timing leave us with more questions than before, requiring maturity and trust.

8. Faith in the Midst of Unanswered Questions

- Habakkuk does not receive every answer, but chooses to trust God's character and ultimate plan.
- Faith means rejoicing in God even when circumstances are bleak (Habakkuk 3:17-18).
- Christians are called to bring their doubts and struggles to God, not hide them.

Application & Encouragement

- Bring your honest questions and frustrations to God—He welcomes your wrestling.
- Remember: God is not the author of evil, but He can use even evil choices for His greater glory and the ultimate good.
- Don't let "main character syndrome" cloud your view—God's purposes are bigger than our personal comfort or immediate understanding.
- Use your free will to love and serve in ways that make God's presence evident to others.
- If you're still wrestling with these questions, you're not alone—mature faith often means living with some tension and mystery.

Closing Prayer Highlights

- Prayed for open hearts, minds, and maturity to receive and wrestle with difficult truths.
- Asked for God's help in understanding, trusting, and living out faith amid confusion and pain.
- Encouraged everyone to keep engaging honestly with God, assured of His love and sovereignty.

Final Thought:

Like Habakkuk, even when "the fig tree does not bud," choose to rejoice in God and trust that He is still on the throne, working out His purposes in ways we may not yet see.