



Teaching Boethius with Josh Gibbs

Lesson 5: The Evil in Other Men

Outline:

Books 1-3 explore how a man deals with the evil in his own heart, whereas Book 4 deals with the evil of other men, particularly people who make life miserable for those who are trying to do good.

- Lady Philosophy says that evil in the world is a distraction from things of God. We should not dwell on the evil of men but focus on the government of God.
- Discuss with students the effects of knowing and dwelling on how much evil exists in the world.
- Discuss the nature of evil prior to discussing Chapter 4:
 - That evil (sin) does not truly exist, but is the absence of goodness (compare to the crack in the Liberty Bell - it exists in that we can see it, but it cannot exist autonomously; it is nothing more than the absence of “bell”).
 - Sin is not what you ARE, but what you are NOT.
 - According to Boethius, sin is not power, but a corruption, or loss, of power.
- p.88: All men seek happiness (which is good); some go about it the wrong way. But:
 - Wicked men are punished in their wickedness.
 - Wickedness is separation from God, which is its own, and ultimate, punishment. No physical punishment atop this can be greater than the punishment the wicked being upon themselves by this separation from God.
 - Punishment (justice) is good for the wicked because it alleviates their suffering by steering them back toward righteousness.

These ideas bring about questions concerning man’s will.

- Boethius conceives of this will as “God gives man whatever he (man) wants.”
 - Those who pursue happiness (and thereby goodness) via wickedness are given what they’ve worked for.
 - Story of the Mormon guests.
 - “Hell is locked from the inside.” - hypothetical story of Christmas and Cousin Trent.
- Overcoming evil requires conditioning of the soul to desire virtue above all else.
 - According to Lady Philosophy, when we look at the wicked, we are looking at humans that are disappearing, losing their humanness, and suffering in the prison that they have created.