Wednesday Class

Notes

Stimulating One Another to Love and Good Deeds

Hebrews 10:19-31 · English Standard Version

Hebrews 10:19-31 forms a single section. The word "therefore" in verse 19 signals that the writer is drawing a conclusion from what he has already established about the superior priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus. Because Jesus has opened the way into the holy places by his blood and through the veil of his flesh, and because he stands as the great priest over the house of God, a response is required. The response is expressed in three "let us" statements that form a progression: draw near, hold fast, and consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. This is not a list of independent commands. It is a sequence. One must first draw near to God and hold fast in his presence before one can effectively help others do the same. The section then supplies the motivation in verses 26-31: the fearful prospect of judgment for those who deliberately turn away after receiving the knowledge of the truth. The focus of the class falls particularly on verses 24-25, where the goal is stated and the means are given.

Hebrews 10:19-31

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The Response Required by Jesus' Work

Because Jesus has given confidence to enter the holy places by his blood and through the veil of his flesh, and because he is the great priest over the house of God, the writer issues three commands that form a single progression. The first is to draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. The way is open, so the response is to go in. The second is to hold fast the confession of hope without wavering, because the one who promised is faithful. Having entered, one is to stay. The third is to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another all the more as the Day draws near. These are not three independent bullet points. They are sequential steps: draw near, hold fast, help others. One cannot effectively help other believers draw near and hold fast if one is not oneself drawing near and holding fast.

Hebrews 10:24
"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,"

The Personal Prerequisite

Encouraging one another does not begin with the other person. It begins with one's own proximity to God. Before one can help another grow, one must be growing. The book of Hebrews points to the means: pay closer attention to what has been heard so as not to drift (Hebrews 2:1), encourage one another day after day (Hebrews 3:13), and draw near to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). These correspond to attention to the word of God, fellowship with one another, and prayer. The same three activities that draw one near to God and keep one there are the activities that equip one to help others do the same. The class on mutual encouragement therefore begins with personal responsibility before God.

Hebrews 4:16
"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

The Goal: Stimulate One Another to Love and Good Deeds

The stated goal is to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Love is directed toward God, toward one another, toward neighbors and enemies, toward the persecuted, toward those in need,

and toward the lost. Good deeds are acts of help that meet actual needs. Often they are the things one does not naturally want to do. Love supplies the motivation; the good deeds follow from it. The writer does not command good deeds in isolation. He commands the stimulation of love from which the deeds arise.

What "Stimulate" Means

The word translated "stimulate" or "stir up" is the same root that appears in Acts 15 for the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. In nearly every context it carries unpleasant overtones. It is not a warm blanket or a gentle cooing. It is a wake-up call, a spur, a jolt out of complacency, a shot of adrenaline, lighting a fire. Jesus overturned tables and made a whip in the temple because that was what the situation required. A stagnant pool grows foul. Without deliberate prodding, most people will not move. The command is therefore a necessity, not an optional extra. Attendance at an assembly is not the same as stimulating others to love and good deeds. Many attend and never consider the first person.

Acts 15:39
"And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,"

How It Is Done

The passage names three practical means. First, consider how. This requires deliberate thought: observing carefully, diagnosing thoughtfully, planning wisely, and acting lovingly. By default, attention turns inward. To stimulate others one must think outwardly, going through a directory, noticing who is present and who is absent, reading faces and circumstances, and approaching with humility rather than superiority. Second, do not forsake the assembling together. The word emphasizes togetherness, not mere presence at the same time. Third, encourage one another. Encouragement is necessary because discouragement is common. It is done by building up, by listening, by meeting the particular need of the person.

The Question of Assembling Together

The phrase "assembling together" places the accent on the fact of being together. The writer could have spoken simply of an assembly; he chose language that highlights mutual presence. Whether the obligation extends beyond the Sunday assembly to other gatherings of believers is a matter of careful thought. The text itself names no day and no particular form of meeting. It requires that when believers assemble, they be present for one another. The purpose of that presence is encouragement, not the creation of drama or the mere fulfillment of a checklist.

Concluding Thoughts

The motivation for this mutual work appears in verses 26-31. If one does not help another, and that other falls away, the result is a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire. The same judgment faces the one who is not helped. Mutual stimulation is therefore an act of mutual preservation. When one Christian helps a fellow brother or sister stay close to God, he is also being helped. Each day that passes is one closer to the end. The response required by the work of Jesus is to draw near, to hold fast, and to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:31
"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."