

Mason's Duty and Happiness

by
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The subject which I wish to talk on tonight regards the relation of a Mason's Duty and his Happiness. I think one of today's greatest problems has to be complacency. The greatest reason for so much distress and sorrow, is surely because mankind has become too self satisfied with the ways things are. In our affluent society we have become satisfied with our thought, -- we have become satisfied with our deeds -- we have become satisfied with our way of living. We have, in the world today, tremendous servants of leisure that our forefathers would never have dreamed possible. It is possible to travel to any place on this globe in just a few short hours. We can watch events happen half a world away, by the aid of television.

All we need to do is flick a switch and we can be in the midst of tomorrow's history, watching it as it happens. Ten years ago who would have thought that we would be watching our old earth on television screens, as seen from the moon. We think nothing of travel, to instance, just a couple of hours ago I was eating my supper, and now this scant time later, I am some 50 odd miles away, enjoying the friendship of this meeting -- not a stupendous thing but unthought of a few years ago. We can do more things and accomplish more, with less effort than at any time in recorded history. Take, for instance our late, and I hope that we can now use the past tense, cold spell -- many, many records for prolonged cold have been tumbled, and yet did we really experience anything more than mild inconvenience or discomfort? In order to make our homes a little more comfortable, all we had to do in most cases was to turn up the thermostat. Contrast this with living memory of

everyone in this room, when a cold spell only half as severe meant frozen water mains, frozen water pipes and untold grief and inconvenience.

Yes brethren, we have it a good deal better now than at any time in history, so why should it be that we have more distress, why do we have hatred and suspicion at every hand, why do we have more sorrow, grief and problems of every kind surrounding us as never before. With all our luxury, you would think that happiness would be everywhere. And yet – we have access to a better, happier way of life, if we will only do something about it.

I believe that we, as Masons, have within our power, the ability to change the course of greed, hate and selfishness which we seem to be treading, to one of love, prosperity and peace. If all Masons throughout the world would practise outside of the lodge, that which we are taught in it, if we were to the philosophies and teachings of our craft, truly this world would take on a new meaning for everyone.

It has been said that "when the world is at its worst, then Masonry should be at its best. " Mediocrity in Masonry will never do anything toward making this world a better place to live in, but I submit, brethren, that if each and every one of us stood up to be counted, if we would turn our backs on that which is fraudulent, that which is cheap, yes that which goes beyond the circumference of the circle in any part of our lives, and said "I believe that is wrong or I believe that is right", and stick with our beliefs through all oppositions, then we would be well on our way to raising our Masonic edifices to the real and meaningful noble edifices of speculative masons, and thus be doing so, we will become the more efficient operative Masons. Surely this is what we set out to

do, when we take our three degrees in the lodge.

Now I think, that when we receive our Master Mason's aprons, and our certificates, all we have really received, is the pass to go on and upward in learning and acting. I think that we should look for more than the obvious in our ritual. For instance, let us ponder the master's query of the Senior Warden – "What induced you to become a Master Mason?" Rather than the obvious in his answer let us look at the answer in another way. – And what is his answer? – "The desire to obtain the secrets of a master Mason, that I might travel in foreign countries..." could this not mean or rather be extended to mean, that I wish to learn the goals of a Master Mason and once I have learned these goals, that I might step out and project myself and my thoughts beyond the mediocrity of that which is right at hand, and get into deeper fields, by working and studying in these foreign lands, or unknown fields – work in those fields and receive the wages, or the product of this learning, and by receiving these – "the better to enable me to support myself and these dependent on me". Now by being better able to support ourselves, could we not mean – the building of a better moral base from which to branch out and hold up ourselves and those dependent on us? And, of course, this can be made much wider than our own particular families – this is the whole universe, to which we are exposed, that becomes dependent – No man is an island unto himself – we are all interdependent, and so, each person we meet or have any dealings with whatsoever, becomes to a certain extent dependent upon us for something, and conversely, we are dependent upon them for something. How we discharge our responsibility to this dependency is, of course, up to each one of us individually, and if we take our

responsibilities as a master Mason seriously, we will learn to support those dependent upon us and "contribute more liberally to the relief of distressed brother master mason's or their widows and orphans." Again we are inclined to think of this in a temporal sense, and, of course, I believe that we should give monetary help to these unfortunates, but should we not think more of our moral support through visitation and succour? Sometimes the widows and orphans are much better off moneywise by being such, than if they weren't widowed or orphaned. Surely the need is much deeper than temporal. I would say that distressed brother Master Masons are much more likely to be those who have lost the word or key to life – those who, somewhere along the line have found no drawings on their trestleboards, and are therefore temporarily (and I say temporarily because I believe that until such time as life has passed from the body of a Mason, any stoppage or interruption in his labor for the craft is temporary), outside the Craft. We all get the feeling at one time or another, that our efforts are wasted – we think "what's the use" – we try to do that which is right and honest, but it seems that our efforts are lost – again this is when we find that we are without drawings on our trestleboards. Here is where the outstretched hand of a brother can pick us up and help us to get back on track. Could it be that lack of concern on our part, could it be something that we said, or more importantly something we did or did not do that caused this brother to falter and to feel that our Craft is just an empty thing after all? Our duties are to see that we do not let down and cause our brothers or any person at all to go astray because of us.

I feel that we miss a very great opportunity – indeed we are derelict in our duties if we do not take newly raised Masons and nurture and care for them early in their

Masonic life and get them desirous of travelling in foreign countries to work and receive Master's wages. This early time in the life of any Mason is the most critical, and I would hazard a guess, that a very great percentage of the people that we lose, or find to be just lukewarm, are that way because we did not exercise our responsibilities to our newly raised brother and bring him on to be active in the Craft. It is so very easy to stop after taking the third degree and sit idly watching what is going on around, and I agree that there are mighty few who will step up and say to the Master, "I want something to do, I want a little responsibility" – on the contrary, he is much more likely to be scared stiff to do anything like giving one of the lectures, or partake in degree work. If for no other reason than that he feels inadequate. However, with a little encouragement and help and praise for efforts expended, we will have one more Master Mason building his temple of which we learn in the lecture on the North East corner, that "on this corner stone and on the foundation laid this evening; you may raise a superstructure perfect in all its parts and honorable to the builder." Yes, it is our duty to influence our environment, not reflect it, and if we are not careful we will do just the opposite.

Now for a short discourse on happiness. You will remember the Senior Deacon taking the candidate up the winding stairs. When he explains the difference between Operative and Speculative Masonry, he says that "by speculative Masonry we learn to subdue the passions, act upon the square, keep a tongue of good report, maintain secrecy and practice charity." "It is so far interwoven with religion (and this is what is so important) as to lay us under obligation to render that rational homage to God, which at once constitutes our duty and our happiness." Duty and happiness go together

– Brethren, I would submit to you that real happiness comes only from the proper discharge of our duties and obligations to God, our neighbors and ourselves. And so while there are great and weighty obligations and responsibilities in being true Master Masons, our active discharge of these duties are what gives us true happiness.

"Let us be happy ourselves and endeavor to promote the happiness of others". This we can do by being true to our teachings and philosophies – not just because lodge is a nice place to come each month, but because we wish to build ourselves up morally and spiritually and help our brethren to do the same, and by so doing discharge our obligations to each other as Master Masons.

I am convinced, that if we each make up our minds to be careful to see that our temples contain no cracks of cheating and wrong-doing, if we endeavor, with the help of the G.A.O.T.U., for without His help, all our efforts are vain-doings, we strive to diligent in the duties of our respective callings, if we are active in our benevolence to all mankind, if we are willing to spend ourselves in doing something beyond ourselves, that which we know is right, then we as Masons will indeed help to usher in a great new day of love, forbearance and peace, and thus find that happiness which we all look for.