

The Jewels Of A Master Mason

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Presented to A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research, #1949

On

March 29, 2003

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Masonry is a Craft which teaches us that knowledge and understanding is almost always concealed. Facts and information abound. But to come to true knowledge and understanding, we must dig below the surface, think and reflect. In the Fellowcraft's Degree we are informed, "Tools and implements of architecture, and symbolic emblems most expressive, are selected by the Fraternity to imprint on the mind wise and serious truths. And thus, through a succession of ages are transmitted unimpaired the most excellent tenets of our institution."

My brothers, words are constantly distorted and twisted to change and warp their meaning. They are indeed fragile and faulty transmitters of true knowledge, that light which we constantly seek in Masonry. But symbols and emblems transmit concepts with consistency, and on many different levels.

Today we shall examine the Jewels of a Master Mason: Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love. The temptation is to jump directly into the meaning of these three jewels, when in fact, their collective name, "Jewels," conceals a clue to their Masonic meaning and importance. So let us first reflect on the concept of a jewel.

The word jewel comes from Middle English and Old French and shares its ancestry with the modern word "joy." The dictionary definitions which point us in the best direction indicate that a jewel is something very valuable and precious. The origins of the word indicate that it is something to give us joy and happiness. But there is also another important meaning. A jewel is the bearing in a watch. Without the jewel, the watch does not work. Without the jewel, it is completely useless. With this understanding of "jewel" let us continue to explore "Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love."

Friendship has an abundance of definitions: attachment, affection, mutual esteem, amity, good

will, kindly aid, help, assistance, affinity, harmony, correspondence, and many more. But how do we know which ones Masonry intends for our illumination? This is where the digging and reflecting comes in. Most everyone thinks of attachment, affection and esteem regarding friendship. But those things can be rather superficial and precarious, involving only the emotions and feelings. A more valuable definition, meriting the label of "jewel," would expect much more of us as Masons than mere emotions. It would point us to the deeper, more exacting implication of expecting work and effort on our part, something much more substantial. This jewel lays upon us the obligation to actually do something, to make some kind of effort, to render aid, to give help and assistance, to maintain harmony and correspondence. Other lessons in Masonry bear this out. Remember the admonition to go on foot and out of your way to be of assistance. Even the lowest of human beings can feel good about someone they like. But Masons must go the extra mile and actually do something helpful for a brother, whether the good feelings are there or not. This is not an easy task, to be a friend, faithful and true. But if it were easy, it would not be worthy of the name "jewel."

Morality is defined as right or good conduct, virtuous conduct. Morality is the quality of an action which renders it good. Morality is rectitude of life and conformity to a standard of right. From the same Latin root comes the noun moral, which is the meaning or intent, as in the moral of a story.

Likewise the meaning and intent of our life should be rectitude of life, conformity to a standard of right. As the jewel of a Master Mason, morality implies action: good conduct, virtuous conduct. And a failure to act for good when the opportunity presents itself will blemish this jewel as badly as wrong conduct. As Master Masons we are called to action, to do good deeds, not simply to think good thoughts. Be ye doers of the word, not just hearers only.

Brotherly Love runs much deeper than mere friendship. We love our family members because they are family. We don't always like them, but we will always help and defend them because they are family. It is the same with Brotherly Love. Our relationship to a brother runs much deeper than friendship. We don't have to like our brother, but we are obliged to love him, to help and defend him, even at the hazard of our own life. We are obliged not to do wrong to a brother. And at the close of every Master Masons Lodge we recite our brotherly obligation to "remind him of his error and aid a reformation."

My brethren, as jewels, Friendship, Morality and Brotherly Love, lay upon us the obligation of action. These actions move us beyond the level of good will and good thoughts to good actions and good deeds. In Masonry we claim to take good men and make them better. Good men already possess good thoughts and intentions. The improvement made by Masonry is in laying upon us the obligation of action — friendly, moral and brotherly action. And when we fail to act, we damage the jewel, and the machinery of Masonry comes to a halt.