

COMPLETING THE TEMPLE

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Text: "So Solomon built the house and finished it." I KINGS, 6:14

Every Mason is interested in the building of a temple. The first concern of every Masonic Lodge, after it is constituted, is to secure a place to meet. Some Lodges are fortunate. They are able to erect a temple a year or two after they have been organized. Others have to wait years before they are able to own a temple. As a Grand Lodge officer it is my happy privilege to have a part in the laying of a cornerstone or dedicating a new temple. It thrills us to be called upon to do this, because it is a sign of progress, and a new temple always brings joy to the hearts of our Craftsmen.

Every Mason is interested in King Solomon's Temple. We are all familiar with the vital part this building plays in Masonry. Solomon was anointed king before his father David died. "And they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, God save King Solomon. And all the people rejoiced with great joy."

Then David charged his son to build a house for the Lord God of Israel. "My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build this house. But the word of the Lord came to me saying, thou shalt not build an house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth. Behold, a son shall be born unto you, and he shall build an house for My name. Now, my son, the Lord be with you."

The land was at peace, and his kingdom was established greatly. "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart." With the material his father had prepared, and with help from Hiram, King of Tyre, Solomon built the Temple. "So Solomon built the Temple and finished it." He overlaid the Temple within with pure gold. "In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the Lord laid, and in the eleventh year was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it." As long as the world stands, Solomon will be remembered for his constructive accomplishment.

Just as the king was engaged many years in erecting a temple to Almighty God, we too, as Masons, are builders. We are not called upon to erect an earthly temple that must finally crumble into dust; we are called upon to build a temple of the spirit, and to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, that the glory and the knowledge and the love of God may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Therefore, let us learn from that prince of builders, King Solomon, the principles of construction which, if we follow them, will assure the success that all of us desire to accomplish.

When the opportunity presented itself to King Solomon to do a worthwhile thing for God, he looked upon it as God's plan for his life. The record tells us that Solomon sent word to Hiram: "You know that David, my father, could not build this house for the wars which were about him. Now the Lord hath given me rest on every side, and I purpose to build it, for the Lord spake unto my father, saying, Thy son shall build an house unto My name."

Then Solomon placed an order for several million dollars' worth of cedars and firs. He sent ten thousand men a month to help cut and hew the timber. At home he had seventy thousand men that bore burdens, and eighty thousand hewers of stone. When the opportunity came, Solomon realized that it was God's plan for his life.

Not all men possess the ability to recognize opportunity. Some, more than others, can visualize the tide which leads on to fortune. As with the boy Samuel of old, some ears are more sensitive to the voice of God than others. But while we cannot all see the opportunity or hear the voice of God equally well, everyone who turns to God, and says, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" will discover something which the Great Architect wants him to be and to do. God has a plan for every man's life, - that he build a life that will glorify Him and be a blessing to the world.

Not only did Solomon discover God's plan for his life, but he proceeded to follow that plan. What kind of Temple did God want him to build? It was not enough to get timber and stone, silver and gold; all these things had to be put together according to a plan -the architect's design. Things do not work themselves out. Buildings are not erected by heaping timber and stones and bricks upon one another. They are built according to a plan.

God has a plan for our lives, and God expects us to work with Him. God did not build the Temple Himself. He put it into the heart of David and Solomon to do it.

The building of the Temple was no simple undertaking. Solomon followed the plan, and we read: "In the eleventh year was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it." Masons must exhibit something of the wisdom of Solomon and plan carefully their lives after the ideal plan of the Great Architect of the Universe. They must devote to their tasks the same scrupulous care that Solomon gave to designing and building the Temple.

Having found God's plan, and having done his utmost to give this plan shape and form by purchasing cedars and firs from Hiram, and by hewing great and costly stones in his own country, Solomon faithfully executed those plans. He had faith to believe that even so Herculean a task as that could be accomplished, and he had the courage to tackle the job.

If ever there was a day when such men are needed, surely we are living in that day. If the grave perils that threaten mankind are to be overcome, we must have men. If principles of right living are to have sway in the hearts of the masses, we must have men. We are living in a grand and a fearful time. As we meditate upon these things, well may our prayer be, "God give us men!"

"God give us men whose aim `twill be

Not to defend some outworn creed,

But to live out the laws of God

In every thought and word and deed.

"God give us men alert and quick

His lofty precepts to translate,

Until the laws of God become

The laws and habits of the State.

"God give us men with hearts ablaze,

All truth to love, all wrong to hate;

These are the patriots America needs,

These are the bulwarks of the State."

The Masonic Lodge can make a real contribution to the world by producing such men. If we really put into practice the great precepts we are taught in Lodge, we can become such men.

What are some of the perils that threaten mankind? One of the cruelest is prejudice. By its nature the Masonic Lodge is in a favorable position to make a real contribution toward the elimination of prejudice of every kind. Having in our membership persons of different creeds, of many races, languages and customs, men from all walks of life, men who put their trust in Almighty God, the Great Architect of the Universe, our Masonic Lodge can point the way by example as well as by precept to the Brotherhood of Man.

Another peril is nationalism. In a large measure selfish nationalism plunged the world into war twice in our lifetime. Nationalism threatens the peace of the world today. International brotherhood cannot be established by suspicion, envy, jealousy, distrust of the motives of others. In our international relationships, as in our personal affairs, the spirit of love and trust and concern must play a prominent part. Masons can make a real contribution here.

Another peril is the widespread carelessness and indifference respecting one's obligation to God and to one's fellowmen. If our country and world are to be brought to a proper recognition of the place of God in human life, we - who profess to know Him must let our faith shine through our works. Only when we give ourselves to responsible living with the self-abandon that Solomon gave to the building of the Temple, can we achieve the victory that came to him. As Masons we are taught "never to commence any great or important undertaking, without first invoking the blessing of Deity"; we can make a real contribution here.

A magnificent organ was installed in a great cathedral. No one but the organist himself was allowed to play that instrument. One day, while the musician was out for lunch, a visitor came and persuaded the sexton to allow him to play the organ. A few minutes later the organist returned to the cathedral. When he heard some intruder playing, he was furious. But he paused when he reached the choir-loft. He had never heard such music before. He wanted to hear more. By and by the music ceased. The two musicians introduced themselves. What was the astonishment of the organist when he discovered that the man whom he at first regarded as an intruder was no other than Felix Mendelssohn! Only a master could get from that instrument the wonderful music it was designed to give forth.

Likewise, it is only when we yield the heartstrings of our lives to the Great Musician, the Great Architect of our lives, that we can produce the heavenly harmonies that they are designed to render.

God grant that when the evening of life approaches for you and for me, it may be truly said of us that the house that God intended us to build has been completed. Then shall we hear the commendation and welcome: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the Temple and City of our God."

"O keep us building, Master, may our hands

Ne'er falter when the dream is in our hearts,

When to our ears there come Divine commands,

And all the pride of sinful will departs;

We build with Thee; O grant enduring worth

Until the Heavenly Kingdom comes on earth."

In the words of King David, I say to you as fellow-Masons:

"Arise therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with you."

"We are blind until we see

That in the Universal Plan

Nothing is worth the making

If it does not make the man.

"Why build these cities glorious

If man unbuilt goes?

In vain we build the world

Unless the builder also grows."