

The Charges to a Lodge of Mark Masters

By W. B. Wojtas PHP

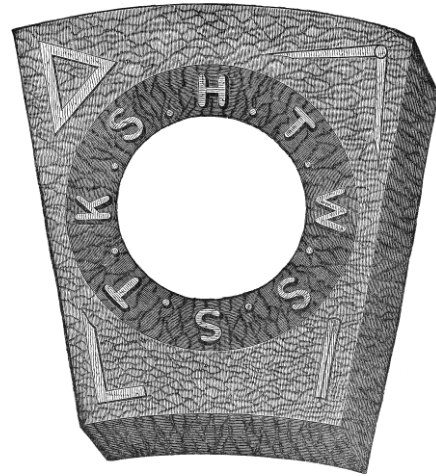
“To change the metaphor, you come to him, as living stones to the immensely valuable living stone (which men rejected but God chose), to be built up into a spiritual House of God, in which you, like holy priests, can offer those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. There is a passage to this effect in scripture, and it runs like this: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on him will by no means be put to shame'.” (First Epistle of Peter CH2:4-6)

The Charges of the Mark Master Degree are very important messages to those of us who have taken the obligation. Albert Mackey wrote the first charge (read at the opening of the Lodge) in his work, *The Book of the Chapter* and it states:

Wherefore Brethren, lay aside all Malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; ye also as living stones, be ye built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God.

Wherefore also, it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a



foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; he that believeth, shall not make haste to pass it over. Unto you, therefore, which believe, it is an honor; and even to them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.

Brethren, this is the will of God, that with well doing, ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men; Love the Brotherhood; fear God.

Why, Brethren! Do not consider the desire to cause harm to another person, deceitful cunning, feigning to be what one is not, the feeling to have what others have, and speaking ill of others.

These are all things which we as men of good moral character should already subscribe to, but may need to be reminded of from time to time. Often real life consumes us and we are not consciously

aware of the obligations we took and the 3 charges we have received prior to this fourth. Reading it, the first thing that comes to mind is that these words are just plain common sense, but to we keep them in the forefront of our minds as we live our lives and deal with our fellow man? As a man of moral character, we often do, but it never hurts to be reminded of it, especially in times of stress or hardships.

Although we have come to know that the Lord is gracious, coming to Him as a living stone, not accepted by men, but Chosen by God, and precious to Him. All of us as living stones, are all used to build a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God.

Knowing that God is good, we all come to him as his precious creations. All of us are a part of the Temple not built by human hands, dedicated to Him. All of us giving up of ourselves to our Creator.

Since it is written in Isaiah 28:16: "So the Lord Yahweh says this, 'Now I shall lay a stone in Zion, a granite stone, a precious corner-stone, a firm foundation-stone: no one who relies on this will stumble.'" Hence to those of you who believe, it is an honor, and even to those of us who do not, to those of us who are not yet perfect, may still be a part of that temple.

Brethren, The will of God teaches us that by living our lives doing good works, we set the example which may cause those who have yet received our light completely, to do so. As a free and accepted man, not using your position to cover any wrong doings, but living as servant of God.

By living as a servant of God, following the moral treatises established in the volumes of sacred law, we are the craftsmen, by our

example, creating perfect ashlar out of those of us who have yet to become perfect. But even those who are yet perfect, are still accepted in the Creator's eyes and are still capable of being stones in the building of the temple. We must still honor them as fellows. We must also work to honor our fellow brethren by setting the example for them to receive light completely, by honoring the tenets and morals of our fraternity. We do this by living our lives, using the tools given to us by the Great Architect, an allegory for "fearing God".

The second charge, which is given at the conclusion of the degree is much easier to read and understand.

Brother : I congratulate you on having been thought worthy of being advanced to this honorary degree of Masonry. Permit me to impress it on your mind, that your assiduity should ever be commensurate with your duties, which become more and more extensive, as you advance in Masonry. In the honorable character of Mark Master Mason, it is more particularly your duty to endeavor to let your conduct in the lodge and among your brethren be such as may stand the test of the Great Overseer's square; that you may not, like the unfinished and imperfect work of the negligent and unfaithful of former times, be rejected and thrown aside, as unfit for that spiritual building — that house not made with hands — eternal in the heavens. While such is your conduct, should misfortunes assail you, should friends forsake you, should envy traduce your good name, and malice persecute you, yet may you have confidence, that among Mark Master Masons you will find friends who will administer relief to your distresses and comfort to your afflictions, ever bearing in mind,

as a consolation under all the frowns of fortune, and as an encouragement to hope for better prospects, that the stone which the builders rejected, possessing merits to them unknown, became the chief stone of the corner.

Seek well that prize, use the lessons of the craft to work with wisdom and earnest to receive your wages, without bearing the burden and heat of the day.

The message which is taught in the Mark Master degree is one of great importance throughout your Masonic life. The symbolism of this parable teaches an important lesson.

In Masonry, the most humble Mason shall receive as much reward as the haughtiest, provided he has labored at the task of seeking the truth as wisely, effectively and faithfully as possible.

Mackey tells us that the wages of a Mason's labors is truth and that the youngest Mason, laboring to seek that truth with great earnest over a short period, more so than the older Masons slowly laboring over the years, will thus receive more light in Masonry as the reward for his earnest labor.

The quarries of our Craft are open to everyone, but it is the one who works the most diligently and in the smartest way, though he began at a later time, shall receive no less than those who have labored longer, but with less heart put into the task.

We will have to endure the heat of the day in our search for truth if we do not do so wisely and with a true goal in sight. If our enthusiasm is not tempered with sound judgment it may take us longer to achieve the same goal as those who arrived after us, but wrought with wisdom and earnest.

Albert Mackey is quoted as saying, "It is not the time that you have been a Mason, but the way in which that time has been employed that will secure the prize of intellectual light."