

What's In Your Masonic Toolbox?

Many times an email arrives that seems worthy of passing on. The following is such an example:

A person only needs to look around to see a rash of less than Masonic behavior going on in some of our Lodges. Brothers back stabbing other Brothers, men disrespecting their Officers, and Officers who can't be bothered to learn their ritual are rampant. It doesn't happen in every Lodge. It happens just often enough that all you have to do is listen at a meeting to hear the complaints. Maybe it is just time to do a little spring-cleaning in our Lodges.

First of all, let's bring out those working tools. Some may have a hard time finding them, as they seem to have discarded them along with the lessons they taught after taking their degrees. Let's just take them out and see if we can find some current uses for them.

We should start with the common gavel. Is the face of your gavel pitted from the hard work you have used it for or is it still in pristine condition from not being used at all? Or is it gouged and marred from being used for things that it was never intended for in the first place. Is the blade on your gavel sharp and well taken care of or has it become dull from inattention? Maybe it is time that we returned it to its original use to remove those things that keep us from our obligations.

Now let's pick up the 24 inch gauge. When it was new it had three distinct segments. Look hard at it and see if it still looks the same. Some look on in it to find that the first segment has grown to the extreme. They spend so much time working that they have forgotten to take care of themselves and have no time for Lodge or mankind in general. Others find that the latter segment has grown, where rest and refreshment or just general self-interest has consumed the largest portion of their time, where they again have little time for Masonry or mankind. Maybe it is time to take a more balanced approach to life and give back that which we have obligated ourselves.

Ok, let's grab the plumb. A simple tool shouldn't have too much problem with it. What it is missing altogether? Or is it that it isn't your tool, it belongs to the Junior Warden? It is too easy to point to the world amid its scandals and say that if you don't grab a little for yourself, you won't get any. But we are taught to walk uprightly through life. To walk with your head held high and your back straight. To eschew those values which have been so quickly thrown aside by others. It is not for us to drop to their level but to seek to raise them to our own.

The most abused tool in our collection is the level. Most Past Masters have discarded this instrument as they have a "new" level after they leave office. I am amazed at how often there is a top down view of these members of our Lodges. How often have I heard that we can't do this or that because that is not the way it was done when they were Master that the young men of the Lodge do not know what they are doing. If we are to move forward into the future we must do things we could not imagine. Maybe it is time to take a close look at the level to find that at its center is a spot that is elevated. It also returns to the same level after it has been elevated. Maybe that is the lesson that needs to be taught. That it is ok to go back where you were and let someone else be elevated for a time.

With the problems we have seen with the plumb and the level, it is no surprise that we find the square ground off to match. A person could probably blame it on the way they hang the Master's jewel or how we place the square on the Great Light of Masonry. Face it, if we were to try to build a building squared by skewed manner in which Master's wear their square it would quickly topple. And that is what is happening in many Lodges. Maybe it is time that we place one side of our square on the level which we are all supposed to travel on and brace it with upright behavior, then maybe we could square ourselves with the Lodge and the world.

Finally we come to the trowel. This simple tool of unity has become a weapon to be wielded against all who have not attained this exalted level. It has also been used to build spite walls between Brothers

of the Lodge. It has been discarded altogether and lies rusting, unused, as it is someone else's job to secure unity within the Lodge. I have heard that the Master's symbol is the gavel of authority, not the trowel of unity. Yes there are disagreements in the Lodge, Brothers have problems with other Brothers, and conflicts occur outside the bounds of the Lodge. As Masons we need to set those in the cloakrooms with our overcoats and not bring them into the Lodge. This is the silence and circumspection that we are taught to regard so highly.

We have gone through the working tools and dusted them off that leaves only one piece of equipment that we need to inspect, our apron. Has it remained spotless? Are there stains of jealousy, spite or conflict? Has it been regularly cleaned with good deeds? Has it been polished by our duty to the widows and orphans of the Lodge? Or has it almost disintegrated with neglect? We are taught that there is no higher honor than to receive our apron. That it is an emblem of innocence and the particular badge of our fraternity. We should strive most of all to keep it clean in both word and deed.

Maybe just maybe if we do some spring-cleaning amongst our own working tools that there would be less of the friction that comes from abrasive acts. If we balanced our actions and squared them, that new life would spring from within our Lodges. That if we took pride and care in upkeep of those basic tools of our profession that we would infect others with our enthusiasm.

Isn't it about time you looked in your toolbox?

- Anonymous