

Two out of Three Ain't Bad
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“TWO OUT OF THREE AIN'T BAD.”

-Meatloaf
(Not a Freemason)

From the Royal Master Lecture:

After the untimely death of Grand Master Hiram Abif, the two surviving Grand Masters instituted this degree of Royal Master in token of their respect for his memory, and as a partial substitute for the Master Mason Degree. Being unable to form the Triangle in giving the Master's Word, as one of their number was dead, they substituted the broken triangle, being the nearest they could come to the original.

They first conferred the degree upon the noble Adoniram, and then upon other particular friends of Hiram Abif. As his friend we now confer it upon you and we give it as an illustrative of the Master Mason Degree.

There is an attitude we have at times that good is the enemy of best. No one wants to settle for just good enough. The lessons of the rough and perfect ashlar in the Entered Apprentice Degree instruct us to aim for a state of perfection. However, none of us start out as perfect ashlar, rather we are quite the opposite. It is way too easy as we improve with time and experience to forget what we were like in our rude and natural state. If we fail to balance out that striving for perfection with what we can practically and effectively do now, then we will procrastinate ourselves into insignificance.

As we know from the Select Master Degree, the unbroken triangle is emblematic of Deity.¹ The broken triangle speaks to us of mortality. Until we lay down our working tools, we will always be imperfect ashlar, not necessarily rough, but not fully perfected. The goal is to get as close to perfect as possible, to strive to best comply and cooperate with God's Divine design and plan for us.

As we are made aware of in Hiram Abif's discourse with Adoniram, the possibility for him not to see the finished and completed work which he is striving toward is not a new idea. Preparations have been made. This leads up to the events of the Master Mason Degree. The ritual's emphasis on the "Word" being buried is an admonition that even upon our death the Word still lies within. It is that that "immortal spark within man, bearing a close affinity to the Supreme Intelligence of the Universe that shall survive the grave and never, never die." Knowing that the Word is deposited within our own internal Secret Vault, we can take comfort in the fact that it's true discovery and revealing only happens when our earthly temple is destroyed.

This takes care of the internal, but the outward manifestation of this internal truth still needs to be addressed. Hiram Abif cannot address it-he's dead. This is why we don't try and do everything ourselves, but find those who we can work with. It makes us more effective and

¹ See the Apron Lecture

reduces burnout. It falls on Solomon King of Israel and Hiram King of Tyre to see the work completed. So what did they do?

Did they cease working? Absolutely not! The work that we've been placed upon this earth to do is greater than any one person, and that's by design. It's imperative that the work continue and be completed, even when we are no longer able to effectively labor individually. If we have an ideal that we are striving toward, (whether individually or corporately) mistakes and setbacks shouldn't deter us. They should cause us to evaluate and adjust but the work still continues.

On the other hand, do Solomon and King Hiram claim that the ideal has been achieved? No. Enter the broken triangle. Two sides are complete, yet the third is broken. Guess what? The Temple and the Secret Vault were still completed. The broken triangle demonstrates that we aren't waiting until perfection to start working. That leads to complacency and it can kill any organization. If we have our parts down 90 % and are willing to do our best and make the mistakes, we will be more effective than the Brother or Companion who knows the part perfectly but refuses to get off the sidelines and participate. There might be times to shut things down for a time to get things right, *but they should be rare*. Acknowledge the need for improvement, strive for it, but continue the momentum. If we have a fundraising goal for charity or for q points goal for our Councils that we fail to be met, although we came close, do we hang our heads? We shouldn't. Progress was still made. Is there room for evaluation and adjustment? Constantly. Let there be no mistake: with everything we do, the bar should be high. When we think we've arrived when we haven't, the standards get lax, participation trophy mentality sets in and everything suffers. Just understand that if we are willing to work with a broken triangle, and yet still strive for that unbroken triangle even though it's unattainable in this life, the work will still be accomplished.

"Just do the best you can."

-Walt Kowalski

Gran Torino