

16<sup>th</sup> Degree  
PRINCE OF JERUSALEM

- 1) The three answers – wine is strongest, women are strongest, the king is strongest... Discuss the problems in living to which each of the three can lead, and suggest, in each case, what the follower of truth---the truly autonomous man, would do or how he would react.

One of the most significant dictums of free men is the freedom/obligation for self-improvement through the constant contemplation of the life we find ourselves in. We are not, by nature, in the same sphere as all other creatures in our world. Animals primarily, perhaps without exception, behave in response to outside stimuli by utilizing their God-given instincts for survival. They do not contemplate nor live by the morals and virtues set forth by the wise philosophic men. They neither reap nor sow nor do they accumulate wealth. Their very existence depends on survival of the fittest which includes eating, sleeping, reproduction, and protection. There is no evil, no good, and no other purpose except survival of their species. They are resilient under hostile conditions frequently overcoming great challenges of nature. Animals compete for leadership among their own and with external rivals as well. The concept of abstract thinking is completely devoid in their lives since their instincts are in complete control in every situation. We can safely say that animals feel and react and, more than likely, never “think” to resolve or ponder over a choice. Obviously, this system works for them because they have existed for millions of years thus escaping extinction. To the free-thinking observer, this might be a good place to start understanding human nature. But, he must realize that instinct alone in a man is not enough to achieve the higher more noble purpose of being a righteous individual. To the contrary, the higher state of mind of a true Freemason dictates that we dominate our instincts and frailties in the hope of attaining that more enlightened life. Simply, we can not just react irresponsibly by instinct to an aggression without first thinking about what the best, most noble response should be. When we are young, there is no real and mature

capacity for meditation yet. This comes with many years of wisdom, education, and contemplation of the righteous life without which a higher state of mind cannot be reached. Subduing ourselves, which includes controlling our passions, is a great step in achieving our masonic goals. We will never equate ourselves with the animals in these respects; they do not have our choices, nor our obligations in the duties we as humans must perform. No one can ever be successful when instinct dominates completely and a reactionary impulse takes over. Restraint allows for reevaluation in seemingly desperate moments giving rise to more effective and just solutions. As a man grows from child to adult, experience also teaches great, useful lessons that we can benefit from in a philosophic realm. Our parents and instructors assist us in forging a beneficent personality which is most essential in a successful society. Though we are born with very particular tendencies, these can be subdued or modified with proper indoctrination including discipline. God-given talents of exceptional nature must always be encouraged and practiced for the good of humanity in general and not the contrary (encourage the good, suppress the bad). Although this is not an easy path, this is the most rewarding in the end. The character of an individual is most certainly measured by his selfless zeal in promoting the positive advancement of the human condition.

Is wine the strongest? Wine, masonically speaking, represents living for the moment, a fun-loving individual, not concerned with the future, having no direction, being a leaf in the stream and not navigating your life. This particular type of individual lives in a dream-like state, being completely indifferent to the surrounding circumstances or environment. He is not the captain at the helm nor does he know where his journey will end. He navigates nowhere but only ages in vain. This person benefits no one and is guilty of a waste of life disparaging great natural abilities given to him by God. We must all agree that this, without a doubt, is one of the greatest crimes a man can be guilty of. To throw God's gift back at His face is immoral, to say the very least. There is a total absence of improvement within himself along with no attempt to struggle for the greater good. It has been said before that a mason who does nothing can never progress without the eternal struggle toward its own advancement. These are men with little virtue, let alone morality. I equate such a

being with a mindless, sterile creature which consumes much but contributes nothing to the human condition. If we are to be men of honor, let us live, act, labor, and contribute as such. After one has passed, all we leave behind is all the good or all the bad we have done as well as what we have not done. It has been taught before that a man must be hot or cold but never warm. Indifference is never a part of a true Freemason's life in any capacity. The Freemason is always selfless, righteous, and always laboring for the good in whatever skills we are capable of realizing. Benefit others in need and you will become an honored servant of the Most High.

Are women the strongest? This temptation encompasses the pleasures including sexuality and the flesh. Those who seek the gratification of the vices, can never be considered free or righteous. Freedom eludes such a man because he serves himself at no end. Pathological mental states of the pleasures bind a man from freedom and cause a self-perpetuating endless cycle. These lead to family conflict, professional disaster, economic downfall, and many such other unfortunate consequences. Irresponsible sexuality brings about conflictive relationships, hatred, and undesired reproduction. The ramifications then become legal issues with long-term financial commitments. Sexuality is always linked to emotional ties that can be very strong. Toying with fragile and personal feelings always ends in undesirable circumstances. Sexually Transmitted Diseases are a consequence of unbridled, lustful ideation which represent long term battles. I include in this discussion the base pleasures of illicit drug use for the simple reason that it is a pleasure of the flesh as well. Indulging these desires never end well. To eat, drink, and be merry can be a good thing if practiced on a milder scale but unfortunately there are those who would convert this into an unhealthy vice. If one submits to the over-indulgence of nutrition, the results are equally disastrous because of undesired medical consequences. Essentially, it is imperative to avoid excesses of any nature to live that more perfect life. Impulses and instincts have to be controlled in an effort to attain that superior state of mind. It is important to strongly elucidate that this temptation, by no means, intends to disparage women in any way since it is only a symbolic question to teach morality and virtue. I personally hold women with the highest, personal regard and I recognize their inestimable and tremendous contribution to humanity without which

the human species could not exist.

Is the King the strongest? There are those who would relinquish all responsibility and control of their lives to people of authority even though these people can do so for themselves. Decision-making always carries with it, authority and consequences as well without exception. The honorable, without question, take blame in responsibility for their own actions and do not blame circumstance or fate. One of the greatest gifts inculcated by Freemasonry is that we should always do our own thinking through meditation and not blindly accept premeditated thoughts and conclusions by others. We as free men, possess the natural right of questioning wrongful authority when we believe it to be untrue and unjust. In our great American nation, when there is a dishonest and untruthful leader, we have the obligation to legally protest and remove him from his position for the good of all concerned. Our legal system provides that the true power of the nation resides with the people who give their consent to be ruled. It is our civic responsibility to participate in the electoral process so that the desires and wishes of our people are satisfied. The genius of this system of government is that tyranny is all but abolished being that the true rulers of our nation are those ruled. There are no corrupt dynasties nor areas of authority which cannot be remedied. The system is all based on eliminating the mistakes of past history and those made by other nations. We, as responsible citizens, are directly or indirectly part of our own government. It is our chance, under these circumstances, to have our voice heard without suppression or subjugation. Involvement is cardinal so that tyranny of the past will never reign here. Blind, illogical adherence to abusive authority is not the nature of man, but the fight for the common good IS the nature of man.

In this degree, it is exemplified that truth is the strongest ideology for the advancement of our species. Truths are highly regarded and shared precepts which are considered by most as irrefutable ideals. "Truth endures and is always strong making possible justice and good, strength and power, and royal and majesty throughout the ages." - BTL. A truth cannot be challenged because, in many ways, it is absolute in the minds of the majority. In contrast, falsehoods are non-existent assertions empty of meaning but which can have the most devastating consequences when concerning the innocent. The mason builds the masonic

temples, not with his hands, mortar, nor stone, but with the ideology of truth in his heart forever. This is the bastion from which masonic teachings emanate to his brothers and the world. The temple will never cease to exist as long as at least one Freemason walks the earth. All good men are welcomed at our table. All good men are invited to contribute to that great edifice not built with hands, eternal in our hearts and souls.

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