

Wine, Women and King

An Essay on the 16th Degree

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We've all heard the old saying "wine, women, and song;" just the very mental imagery brings visions of debauchery to mind. Let us revise this, just a little, to discuss wine, women, and yes a king! It does change the original picture, but rest assured, they are related. They both involve our ability to control our lives; be the true Master of ourselves so to speak. We can find this very lesson contained in the 16th Degree.

In this essay, we will examine each of those areas: wine, women, and the king; dissecting the consequences of living such a life, and how a truly autonomous, responsible man should react. This is especially important for those seeking truth, which is why understanding the consequences is key to Freemasons in subduing our passions. So please, gentle Brother, get comfortable. Settle back and let us join on this path of Light together.

Before treading our way down these dark, and paths into our quest, let us first revisit what it means to subdue our passions. This is nothing to take lightly my Brother. To truly master ourselves, we must master, or rather, control our passions. That is not to mean that all passions are bad, or that all passions are vices. Even good passions can cause us to become overzealous to the end that it causes our behavior to be self-destructive. I have witnessed Brothers so passionate about Freemasonry; joining every appendant body, joining multiple Lodges, and ending up away from family constantly. Yes, a passion for Freemasonry is a good thing, but not to the detriment of his family. Not only is he hurting his family, he is also breaking his obligation to them. Of course, this is not the only example of a seemingly good passion gone badly. It does help illustrate the need for subduing our passions in all aspects of our life. When we let a passion, good or bad, rule our thoughts and our actions, and our objectivity is lost. This usually, but not always, does not end well for all involved.

The Freemason strives to control his passions, always striving to remain in control of his actions and thoughts. He is not to be a slave to his basal desires like an animal. In doing so, he is purifying his soul, and coming closer to Deity. Let us now examine, in detail, the effects of wine, women, and the king when we allow these "ruffians" to inject their poisons into our life.

Wine symbolizes the desire for one to live only for the moment; carpe diem, or seize the day mentality. Throwing caution to the wind and letting the cards fall as they may. We all know people that live by this simple philosophy; never looking to tomorrow or the potential effects of their actions. It is a very hedonistic existence to say the least. Those that live by in this manner have totally given control of their lives to fate. We see examples of this kind of living in sitcoms and reality TV; unfortunately this seems to be the norm. Imagine if everyone lived according to this lifestyle. We also see this lifestyle on many college campuses across the United States, resulting in a lot of freshmen failing out that first year. You could never depend on anyone for anything. No sense of duty, honoring of commitments; a person's word could not be trusted past the time it would take to speak.

True, we should live each day fully, as if our last, but that doesn't mean not keeping within due bounds of duty, and keeping to our sacred obligations. This is not the lifestyle of a Freemason, but more of an unsupervised adolescent.

Women, in this instance, represent giving into our lower basal nature and giving into lust, or other impulsive needs. Oh yes, we see this played out on the TV as well. In fact, it is glorified and accepted so much that when one leader of this nation was caught, far too many people were ok with it. Now that says something about where we have evolved socially. If this activity is ok for the President of the United States to engage in, then it has to be fine for others to follow. Allowing our basal nature to guide our life is just as bad as the wine examples. There is no logic, or much thought behind those actions other than to satisfy our instincts.

I would dare say that this desire to satiate these appetites has encroached into all levels of society. Young men and women dressed respectfully, and conducted themselves in like manner. Today, we see children dressed inappropriately, flaunted in beauty contests, young men and women wearing far too revealing clothing especially for their age, and engaging in sexual activities. Even TV commercials promote this lifestyle. The societal norms seem to encourage promiscuity and put pressure on those that would lead a chaste life, while in their adolescent years, to give into the "dark side." Combine this with wine, and we have put ourselves in living for the moment and giving into impulsive desires without regard to consequence; "if it feels good, then by all means do it" attitude.

In the obligation of the 3rd Degree, we are admonished against this type of behavior. It is part of subduing our passions; our basal nature so that we are guided by a pure spirit instead of by carnal desire. We have seen, through history, the ruin of men giving into lust. Caesar, Marc Antony, and even King Solomon fell because of allowing lust to rule them rather than subduing their passions.

Finally, we have the King. Do we simply follow the edicts of a King, or leader blindly? That is nothing more than letting someone think for you regardless of the outcome. There is nothing quite like a charismatic leader swaying the populace and binding their will to his or her own with almost no effort at all. Immediately, Adolf Hitler comes to mind, as does the Reverend Jim Jones. How easily they were able to persuade a country, and individuals down paths of pure evil destruction. It is not just limited to giving in and allowing politicians or clergy to dictate and run our lives. To blindly give "the wheel" to someone over your life is dangerous, if not disastrous.

The right to make our own decisions and choices is given to us by Deity. We were not given such faculties to allow others to determine our own truths as we understand them. Tyranny certainly flourishes in such an environment, fanned by the flames of indifference. The very teachings of the Scottish Rite Degrees stress the importance of each Freemason being the master of his own thought, guarding against the dogma and sentiments of those trying to manipulate emotions for their own biased beliefs.

At the end of Lodge of Perfection, we should have built a solid foundation of strong Masonic character. We have subdued our passions, and are constantly seeking improvements in ourselves through our Masonic journey into our soul. In doing so, we are bringing ourselves closer to Deity; moving from the material aspects of our world into the more divine and spiritual. We should be the true master of ourselves, tempered and tested going from the rough ashlar we were when we knocked on the door of Freemasonry, to the perfect ashlar fit for that spiritual temple not built by hands.

The examples of those lifestyles of wine, women and king do not fit at all into our Masonic way of thinking or living. Each one of those lifestyle examples require us to give up control of ourselves, and to give into our basal natures of impulsive conduct with regards to the wine and especially those desires discussed under women. Allowing another to direct our thoughts and opinions, shaping our ashlar to fit their desires and purpose is deplorable. As Freemasons, we must ultimately be the master of our own thoughts and choices. Our truths cannot be determined for us, but only by us. That holds true even within the hallowed environs of our Lodges, evidenced by such a simple process as balloting; holding that no Brother can be questioned regarding or upbraided for his ballot. That basic scenario is so tantamount to self-determination and government; not to be swayed by a leader or other Lodge members.

We are admonished to walk upright among our several stations. Not to be a slave to our impulses and basal natures; to live our lives fully, but within due bounds of mankind; with purpose and rectitude. We must live more spiritually rather than focus on the material offerings of this world. Following our own discovered truths, acquired in our Masonic journeys. We have but one life here on this earth; one chance to live a life of dignity, honor, and purpose. Living the examples of wine, women and king is definitely a way to waste the gift of life given us by the Grand Architect of the Universe.