

Sharing The Real Secrets Of Freemasonry  
By Paul E. Heilman, Past DEO

The apprehension and uncertainty we felt when we first approached the door of Freemasonry is a very vivid memory for most of us. What mysteries lie beyond the closed door? What would we be told? What were these secrets that we were unable to behold by sight? What if we made a mistake?

The answer to the last questions became indelibly apparent when the penalty of the obligation was laid out before us in precise detail. What secrets could be so important that such strong language would be required to insure a strict obedience?

The strong language is only symbolic in nature. The sincerity of a person is often judged by the language he uses and the manner in which he presents his thoughts and ideas. If strong and harsh phrases are used as a self-imposed penalty, a person is more likely to appear believable and sincere.

As children we may have once said, "Cross my heart and hope to die" or "Stick a finger in my eye" to prove to our friends the sincerity with which we spoke. Perhaps as an adult we might respond to the questions, "Are you telling the truth"? by saying, "May lightning strike me dead on the spot; if I am not".

Our sincerity might then be linked to just how harsh a self-imposed penalty we would be willing to place upon our own words and actions. By the language of the obligations we bind ourselves in thought, word, and deed to the duties we assume as a Mason even though the only penalties the Masonic fraternity can impose are reprimand, suspension or expulsion.

What then are these secrets which we bind ourselves to before the lodge and our brethren?

Rather than be specific, a few general guidelines might be kept in mind:

We should refrain from talking about or using any of the signs, words, grips and other means of recognition when in strange and mixed company.

We should keep silent about the methods used to confer the degrees and the obligations of those degrees in whole or in part.

We should refrain from irresponsible talk that might compromise the name or reputation of our lodge, any other lodge, or any man and his family. Maintaining the privacy of any lodge or man is one of the greatest duties we assume as Freemasons.

If we accept that these guidelines outline what we should not share with others, what then can we share about this great experience we have undergone?

We should be expected to share what Masonry means to us, what it has taught us; what we have learned about ourselves. To not do so is of no benefit to our family our friends our community and most especially ourselves.

To keep secret *how* we are taught the lessons of Freemasonry satisfies our obligation. To share *what* we have learned about the mysteries of Freemasonry safely lodged within our breast gets at the heart of understanding what it means to be a Mason.

Each man brings his own moral structure with him when he enters our door, therefore, each mans experience in Masonry will be unique. One Mason cannot know what that is to another, so it is a secret. The real secret of Freemasonry will then be different for each of us. We were first prepared to be made Masons in our hearts. The true secrets of Masonry were in our hearts before we first knocked on the door of the lodge. If they had not been, we would never have been invited to enter by petition or ballot.

Freemasonry offers us the opportunity to explore new paths by the aide of the light we find within its doors. The object lessons we learn teach us not only how to regulate our own personal lives, but how we may also benefit society and those about us. It is difficult to realize these benefits without sharing something about those mysteries and secrets safely lodged within our breasts.

For generations Masons have safely lodged the mysteries of Freemasonry so tightly within their breasts that its true purpose and identity have been lost or misrepresented by those kept ignorant of its true meaning. As we discover the true secrets of Freemasonry within our own hearts, should we not share that light so that all may be touched and grow because of it?