

## Beam harvesting

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

*Matthew 7:5*

We often hear this verse and its context quoted and applied with an emphasis on its first part. That emphasis is right and proper, especially in the bigger context of the sermon on the mount, in which Jesus condemns hypocrisy in various applications, which were exemplified by the scribes and Pharisees of Israel. These men had set themselves up as the spiritual leaders of the Israelite people, and, as such, had defined their own set of religious guidelines and extended rules upon which they based their own measures of holiness. In addition to their hypocritical exercises of alms-giving, public prayer, and feigned fasting, all for the purpose of being seen of men (Matthew 6:1, 5, 16), they had used their rules of “holiness” for the purpose of judging others, their “brothers,” against themselves. We even see accounts in the gospels of them using this tactic against Jesus and His disciples. Yet in this warning, Jesus exposes their sin problem, with the “beam” metaphor, against the sins, or “motes,” of those they chose to judge. A significant aspect of their beam was that the standards they created were ones that they could observe and count for themselves, while by their manner of maintaining them they completely missed the true spiritual points of God’s law. Jesus elaborates on this hypocrisy when He addresses them later (Matthew 23:23, etc.).

It is notable here that Jesus does not stop with the first part, but goes on to provide the positive extension of His admonition. He does not only condemn their beam. He also gives them a good reason to cast it out. As in the entire sermon, He calls those listening to a nobler cause, which is to be a true help to a brother who needs humble correction. But there is no path to such humility without recognizing and removing the grievous beam that we bear within ourselves. Yet, to heed His warning is to always first judge ourselves, for the purpose of being purged by God, not to flaunt our cleansing, but to recognize in fact the beams of our own weakness, that we might become useful to God, and therefore to others. This is the spirit of meek restoration to which we are called in Galatians 6:1. Let us therefore be about the business of the deforestation of our own eyes, that we might fulfill the whole of Jesus’ command with meekness and gentleness.