The Mote And The Beam - Roy Hession

From "The Calvary Road"

THE MOTE AND THE BEAM

THAT friend of ours has got something in his eye! Though it is only something tiny - what Jesus called a mote - how pain-ful it is and how helpless he is until it is removed! It is surely our part as a friend to do all we can to remove it, and how grate-ful he is to us when we have succeeded in doing so. We should be equally grateful to him, if he did the same service for us.

In the light of that, it seems clear that the real point of the well-known passage in Matthew 7: 3-5 about the beam and the mote is not the forbidding of our trying to remove the fault in the other person, but rather the reverse. It is the injunction that at all costs we should do this service for one another. True, its first emphasis seems to be a condemnation of censorousness, but when the censoriousness in us is removed, the passage ends by saying, "Then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye." According to the New Testament, we are meant to care so much for the other man that we are willing to do all we can to remove from his eye the mote which is marring his vision and hindering his bless-ing. We are told to "admonish one another" and "exhort one another" and to "wash one another's feet" and "to provoke one another to love and good works." The love of Jesus poured out in us will make us want to help our brother in this wa-y.

What blessing may not come to many others through our willingness humbly to challenge one another, as led by God. A humble Swiss, named Nicholas of Basle, one of the Society of the "Friends of God," crossed the mountains to Strasbo-rg and entered the Church of Dr. Tauler, the popular preacher of that city. Said Nicholas, "Dr. Tauler, before you can do your greatest work for God, the world and this city, you must die - die to yourself, your gifts, your popularity, and even yo-ur own goodness, and when you have learned the full meaning of the Cross, you will have a new power with God and m-an." That humble challenge from an obscure Christian changed Dr. Tauler's life, and he did indeed learn to die, and becOME one of the great factors to prepare the way for Luther and the Reformation. In this passage the Lord Jesus tells us how we may do this service for one another.

What is the Beam?

First, however, the Lord Jesus tells us that it is only too possible to try to take the tiny mote, a tiny speck of sawdust, out of the other's eye when there is a beam, a great length of timber, in ours. When that is the case, we haven't a chance of casting out the mote in the other, because we cannot see straight ourselves, and in any case it is sheer hypocrisy to attempt to do so.

Now we all know what Jesus meant by the mote in the other person's eye. It is some fault which we fancy we can discer-n in him; it may be an act he has done against us, or some attitude he adopts towards us. But what did the Lord Jesus mean by the beam in our eye? I suggest that the beam in our eye is simply our unloving reaction to the other man's mote. Without doubt there is a wrong in the other person. But our reaction to that wrong is wrong too! The mote in him has pro-voked in us resentment, or coldness, or criticism, or bitterness, or evil speaking, or ill will - all of them variants of the basic ill, unlove. And that, says the Lord Jesus, is far, far worse than the tiny wrong (sometimes quite unconscious) that provoked it. A mote means in the Greek a little splinter, whereas a beam means a rafter. And the Lord Jesus means by his comparison to tell us that our unloving reaction to the other's wrong is what a great rafter is to a little splinter! Every time we point one of our fingers at another and say, "It's your fault," three of our fingers are pointing back at us. God hav-e mercy on us for the many times when it has been so with us and when in our hypocrisy we have tried to deal with the person's fault, when God saw there was this thing far worse in our own hearts.

But let us not think that a beam is of necessity some violent reaction on our part. The first beginning of a resentment is a beam, as is also the first flicker of an unkind thought, or the first suggestion of unloving criticism. Where that is so, it only distorts our vision and we shall never see our brother as he really is, beloved of God. If we speak to our brother with that in our hearts, it will only provoke him to adopt the same hard attitude to us, for it is a law of human relationships that "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."
Take it to Calvary.

No! "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye." That is the first thing we must do. We must recognise our unloving reaction to him as sin. On our knees we must go with it to Calvary and see Jesus there and get a glimpse of what that sin cost Him. At His Feet we must repent of it and be broken afresh and trust the Lord Jesus to cleanse it away in His precious Blood and fill us with His love for that one - and He will, and does, if we will claim His promise. Then we shall probably need to go to the other in the attitude of the repentant one, tell him of the sin that has been in our heart and what the Blood has effected there and ask him to forgive us too. Very often bystanders will tell us, and sometimes our own hearts, that the sin we are confessing is not nearly so bad as the other's wrong, which he is not yet confessing. But we have been to Calvary, indeed we are learning to live under the shadow of Calvary, and we have seen our sin there and we can no longer compare our sin with another's. But as we take these simple steps of repentance, then we see clearly to cast out the mote out of the other's eye, for the beam in our eye has gone. In that moment God will pour light in on us as to the other's need, that neither he nor we ever had before. We may see then that the mote we were so conscious of before, is virtually non-existent - it was but the projection of something that was in us. On the other hand, we may have revealed to us hidden underlying things, of which he himself was hardly conscious. Then as God leads us, we must lovingly and humbly challenge him, so that he may see them too, and bring them to the Fountain for sin and find deliverance. He will be more likely than ever to let us do it - indeed if he is a humble man, he will be grateful to us, for he will know now that there is no selfish motive in our heart, but only love and concern for him.

When God is leading us to challenge another, let not fear hold us back. Let us not argue or press our point. Let us just say what God has told us to and leave it there. It is God's work, not ours, to cause the other to see it. It takes time to be willing to bend "the proud stiff-necked I." When we in turn are challenged,

let us not defend ourselves and explain ourselves. Let us take it in silence, thanking the other; and then go to God about it and ask Him. If he was right, let us be humble enough to go and tell him, and praise God together. There is no doubt that we need each other desperately. There are blind spots in all our lives that we shall never see, unless we are prepared for another to be God's channel to us.