

Matthew 7:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye,
but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Analysis

Jesus employs vivid hyperbole to expose the absurdity of judgmental attitudes. A 'mote' (κάρφος/karphos) is a speck of sawdust or small splinter, while a 'beam' (δοκός/dokos) is a large wooden plank or log. The image is deliberately ridiculous—someone with a log protruding from their eye attempting delicate eye surgery on another! This illustrates how easily we see minor faults in others while remaining blind to massive defects in ourselves. The Greek verb 'beholdest' (βλέπεις/blepeis) suggests focused attention, while 'considerest not' (οὐ κατανοεῖς/ou katanoeis) means failing to perceive or understand. This selective vision reveals pride and self-deception. Jesus doesn't forbid discernment of sin (verse 5 addresses removing the speck after self-examination), but He condemns hypocritical judgment that magnifies others' faults while minimizing our own.

Historical Context

Rabbinic literature also addressed judgmental attitudes, with similar emphasis on self-examination before correcting others. However, first-century religious culture often fostered proud comparison—Pharisees thanked God they weren't like 'other men' (Luke 18:11). Jesus' teaching reversed this dynamic, calling His followers to radical humility. This principle was crucial for the early church's unity amid diverse backgrounds (Jewish, Gentile, slave, free) where judging based on cultural practices could fragment the community (Romans 14:1-13).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What 'beams' in your own life might you be ignoring while focusing on others' 'motes'?
2. How does self-righteous judgment damage relationships and distort our witness to Christ?
3. What is the difference between righteous discernment and the hypocritical judgment Jesus forbids?

Interlinear Text

τί	δὲ	βλέπεις	τὸ	κάρφος	τὸ	ἐν	τῷ	ὀφθαλμῷ
why	And	beholdest	G3588	thou the mote	G3588	that is in	G3588	eye
G5101	G1161	G991		G2595		G1722		G3788

τοῦ	ἀδελφοῦ	σου	τὴν	δὲ	ἐν	τῷ	σῷ	ὀφθαλμῷ
G3588	brother's	thy	G3588	And	that is in	G3588	thine own	eye
	G80	G4675		G1161	G1722		G4674	G3788

δοκὸν	οὐ	κατανοεῖς
the beam	not	considerest
G1385	G3756	G2657

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:1 (Parallel theme): Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Luke 18:11 (Parallel theme): The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

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