

Luke 20:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

Analysis

But he perceived their craftiness (κατανοήσας δὲ αὐτῶν τὴν πανουργίαν, katanoēsas de autōn tēn panourgian)—the verb κατανοέω (katanoeō) means to discern thoroughly, perceive completely. Jesus sees through their πανουργία (panourgia), a term meaning cunning, trickery, unscrupulous cleverness—the same word Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 4:2 for shameful hidden ways.

Why tempt ye me? (τί με πειράζετε, ti me peirazete)—the verb πειράζω (peirazō) can mean 'test' or 'tempt.' They're not seeking wisdom but attempting to ensnare him, echoing Satan's temptations in the wilderness. Jesus's question exposes their motive before answering their substance—he refuses to play the rigged game.

Historical Context

Greek philosophical tradition distinguished between sophistry (clever but deceptive argument) and genuine wisdom. Jesus's exposure of their panourgia would resonate with educated audiences who valued philosophical honesty. Socrates similarly exposed sophists who used questions to trap rather than to teach.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's example teach us to address the motive behind a question before answering its content?
2. When does legitimate testing cross into sinful tempting or entrapment?
3. What spiritual gift allows discernment of craftiness versus genuine inquiry?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------|-------|--------|-----------|------------|----------|-------|
| κατανοήσας | δὲ | αὐτούς | τὴν | πανουργίαν | εἶπεν | πρὸς |
| he perceived | But | their | | craftiness | and said | unto |
| G2657 | G1161 | G846 | G3588 | G3834 | G2036 | G4314 |
| αὐτούς | τί | μέ | πειράζετε | | | |
| their | Why | me | tempt ye | | | |
| G846 | G5101 | G3165 | G3985 | | | |

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 3:19 (Parallel theme): For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.
