

Acts 19:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

Analysis

They drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward—The Jews pushed Alexander (probably a Jewish spokesperson) to **make his defense** (ἀπολογεῖσθαι, *apologeisthai*) to the crowd, likely attempting to distance Judaism from Paul's Christianity. **Alexander beckoned with the hand** (κατασεῖσας τὴν χεῖρα, *kataseisas tēn cheira*)—the rhetorical gesture for requesting audience silence—but never got to speak (verse 34).

This moment captures the tragic irony of Jewish-Christian relations in Acts: Jews repeatedly tried to distinguish themselves from Christians, fearing Gentile hostility would spill onto them. Yet in pagan eyes, the distinction meant nothing—both were ethnic/religious minorities. Alexander's attempted apologetic failed because mob rage doesn't listen to nuance.

Historical Context

Jews in Asia Minor faced recurring tensions with pagan populations, periodically erupting in violence (as under Caligula and later Hadrian). Jewish communities often sought to distance themselves from Christian controversies to maintain precarious social standing. This Alexander may be the coppersmith mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:14 who opposed Paul, suggesting a pattern of Jewish hostility to Paul's Gentile mission.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do efforts to distance yourself from 'controversial' believers reflect either wisdom or cowardice?
2. What does this failed apologetic teach about the futility of appeasing mobs versus standing firm in truth?

Interlinear Text

ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ὄχλου προεβίβασαν Ἀλέξανδρος
out of **And** ^{G3588} **the multitude** **they drew** **Alexander**
G1537 G1161 G3793 G4264 G223

προβαλόντων αὐτὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων· ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος
forward **him** ^{G3588} **the Jews** ^{G3588} **And** **Alexander**
G4261 G846 G2453 G1161 G223

κατασείσας τὴν χεῖρα ἤθελεν ἀπολογεῖσθαι τῷ
beckoned ^{G3588} **with the hand** **and would** **have made his defence** ^{G3588}
G2678 G5495 G2309 G626

δήμῳ
unto the people
G1218

Additional Cross-References

Acts 12:17 (Parallel theme): But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

