

Acts 19:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

Analysis

For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar—The town clerk reveals his primary concern: Roman oversight. The phrase κινδυνεύομεν ἐγκαλεῖσθαι στάσεως (kindyneuomen enkaleisthai staseōs, 'we are in danger to be accused of sedition') uses the serious charge of στάσις (stasis, 'insurrection, riot'). Under Roman rule, unauthorized assemblies, especially violent ones, could be interpreted as rebellion—a capital offense for leaders and potentially leading to loss of civic privileges for the entire city.

There being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse—The clerk admits there's no αἰτίας (aitias, 'cause, legal grounds') to justify this συστροφῆς (systrophēs, 'gathering, conspiracy, riot'). He cannot provide a λόγον (logon, 'defense, explanation') to Roman authorities. His fear is pragmatic and political—protecting Ephesus's status and his own position—yet God uses even self-interested officials to protect His church.

Historical Context

After the Social War and civil conflicts, Rome was hypersensitive to insurrection in the provinces. Cities enjoyed varying degrees of self-governance (Ephesus was a 'free city'), but this status could be revoked for civil unrest. The proconsul of Asia would investigate any reported riot, and consequences could include military occupation, loss of privileges, or execution of leaders. The town clerk's fear was

well-founded—the emperor Claudius had recently expelled Jews from Rome for 'rioting' over 'Chrestus' (likely Christ), showing Rome's zero tolerance for religious disturbances.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God sovereignly use even the self-interest of unbelieving officials to accomplish His purposes for the church?
2. What does this passage teach about the importance of Christians maintaining good civic standing and not giving unnecessary offense?
3. In what ways should Christians today be aware of how their public actions might affect gospel witness and religious liberty?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	γὰρ	κινδυνεύομεν	ἐγκαλεῖσθαι	στάσεως	περὶ	τῆς
G2532	For	we are in danger	to be called in question	uproar	for	G3588
G1063		G2793	G1458	G4714	G4012	
σήμερον	μηδενὸς	αἰτίου	ὑπάρχοντος	περὶ	οὗ	
this day's	no	cause	there being	for	G3739	
G4594	G3367	G158	G5225	G4012		
δυνησόμεθα	ἀποδοῦναι	λόγον	τῆς	συστροφῆς	ταύτης	
we may	give	an account	G3588	concourse	G3778	
G1410	G591	G3056		G4963		