

Acts 21:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

Analysis

Paul's self-identification - 'a Jew of Tarsus... a citizen of no mean city' - established his credibility without boasting. Tarsus's reputation for learning and commerce gave Paul standing, while his Jewish identity connected him to those he sought to address. His request to speak showed courage and wisdom in seizing an opportunity for witness despite having just faced a murderous mob.

Historical Context

Tarsus was a major university city in Cilicia, known for its schools of philosophy and rhetoric. It rivaled Athens and Alexandria as an educational center, making citizenship there a mark of culture and standing.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How can you acknowledge your background and credentials without pride, using them for gospel opportunity?

2. What does Paul's boldness to request a speaking opportunity teach about seizing moments for witness?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν δέ ὁ Παῦλος Ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος μέν εἰμι
said But G3588 Paul I a man G3303 am
G2036 G1161 G3972 G1473 G444 G1510

'Ιουδαῖος Ταρσεὺς τῆς Κιλικίας οὐκ ἀσήμου πόλεως
which am a Jew of Tarsus G3588 a city in Cilicia of no mean city
G2453 G5018 G2791 G3756 G767 G4172

πολίτης· δέομαι δέ σου ἐπίτρεψόν μοι λαλῆσαι πρὸς
a citizen I beseech But thee suffer me to speak unto
G4177 G1189 G1161 G4675 G2010 G3427 G2980 G4314

τὸν λαόν
the people
G3588 G2992

Additional Cross-References

Acts 9:11 (Parallel theme): And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

Acts 22:3 (Parallel theme): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Acts 6:9 (Parallel theme): Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.