

Acts 21:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Analysis

Paul's gesture for silence and choice to speak 'in the Hebrew tongue' demonstrated cultural sensitivity and rhetorical skill. Speaking Hebrew (likely Aramaic, the common Jewish language) created immediate connection with his audience and showed he was no apostate. The resulting 'great silence' gave Paul opportunity to present his testimony, showing how God opens doors even in hostile circumstances.

Historical Context

The Hebrew language (or Aramaic) was the tongue of Jewish learning and devotion. Paul's use of it, rather than Greek, showed respect for his audience's heritage and created rapport by speaking their heart language.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How can you adapt your communication style to connect with hostile or skeptical audiences?
2. What does Paul's example teach about using cultural knowledge and language skills for gospel witness?

Interlinear Text

ἐπιτρέψαντος	δὲ	αὐτοῦ	ὁ	Παῦλος	ἑστὼς	ἐπὶ	τῶν
licence G2010	And G1161	him G846	G3588	Paul G3972	stood G2476	on G1909	G3588
ἀναβαθμῶν	κατέσεισεν	τῇ	χειρὶ	τῷ	λαῷ		
the stairs G304	and beckoned G2678	G3588	with the hand G5495	G3588	unto the people G2992		
πολλῆς	δὲ	σιγῆς	γενομένης	προσεφώνησεν	τῇ		
a great G4183	And G1161	silence G4602	when there was made G1096	he spake G4377	G3588		
Ἑβραΐδι	διαλέκτῳ	λέγων					
unto them in the Hebrew G1446	tongue G1258	saying G3004					

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.

Acts 22:2 (Parallel theme): (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

Acts 26:14 (Parallel theme): And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

John 5:2 (Parallel theme): Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

Acts 21:35 (Parallel theme): And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

Acts 19:33 (Creation): 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.

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