



**It's Our Story –
But It's Not About Us
Acts 21:37-22:29**

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for Melbourne Community Church
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Where We've Come in Acts

- ❖ Watching the church blossom from Jesus' Ascension and the Day of Pentecost.
- ❖ Good news about Jesus is spreading across the world.
- ❖ Paul said good-bye to many of his church-planting locations.
- ❖ Paul in chains after false rumors were started about him.



Key Points for Today

- ❖ God can powerfully use our Jesus-story.
- ❖ Using the gifts God has given us, opens doors to share God's love.
- ❖ God wants to actively heal those attitudes, values, prejudices — those things not like Jesus.



Key Points for Today

- ❖ We can miss God's mission when we make life about us — excluding others.
- ❖ God's mission through us is to bless the world.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer, resting on an open book. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the book and the person's arms. The lighting is warm and natural, creating a serene and focused atmosphere.

Brief Review O.T. Scripture

To Get Background Context



A Parenthesis ...

- ❖ If the Bible is going to impact us, must bring it into our context.
- ❖ Each time we hear “Jew,” let’s put in our names.
- ❖ Let’s see what God might teach us!

Acts 21:37-38

As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?” “Do you speak Greek?” he replied. “Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?”

Acts 21:39-22:1

Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people." After receiving the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic: "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."

Acts 21:37-22:1

- ❖ Uses his status to open the door to God's work — NO EGO TRIP HERE!
- ❖ He spoke to the power controllers with truth.
- ❖ He speaks their "first language."

Acts 22:2-3

When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today."

Acts 22:4-5

“I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.”

Paul's Pedigree

- ❖ Born a Jew.
- ❖ In an important city.
- ❖ Raised in Jerusalem.
- ❖ Studied under Gamaliel.
- ❖ I know the Mosaic law.

Paul's Pedigree

- ❖ I was zealous — **JUST LIKE YOU!**
- ❖ I was on the inside with the religious leaders.
- ❖ I was doing what you're trying to do **TO ME!**

Acts 22:6-8

“About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied.

Acts 22:9-10

“My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked. ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’”

Acts 22:11-12

“My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me. A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.



Acts 22:13

“He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.”



Acts 22:6-13

- ❖ Paul's story is a summary of Luke's description in Acts 9.
- ❖ This is my story ... you can't refute that.
- ❖ Our stories always connect.



Acts 22:14-15

“Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.’



Acts 22:16

**“And now what are you waiting for?
Get up, be baptized and wash
your sins away, calling on his name.”**

Acts 22:14-16

- ❖ Chosen by God, for God's mission.
- ❖ Like Paul, we each are called to live out God's mission.
(Matthew 28 - "Great Commission")
- ❖ **OUR LIVES ARE NOT FOR OUR MISSION!**
- ❖ **God is already at work in the world!**



Alan Hirsch

**“The Church doesn’t have a mission.
God’s mission has a church.”**



Acts 22:17-18

“When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’”

Acts 22:19-20

“Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’

Acts 22:21-22

“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!”



“Rid the earth of him?”

- ❖ “Gentile”— non-Jewish people, like you and me.
- ❖ Was like a **SWEAR WORD**.
- ❖ They were ok with the murder of Stephen; the capture of men, woman and children who followed Jesus’ **WAY**.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer, resting on an open book. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the book and the person's arms. The lighting is warm and natural, creating a serene and contemplative atmosphere.

“Rid the earth of him?”

- ❖ **Paul reminded them: lost their way from God’s covenant plan — to bless all nations.**



“Jewish Exceptionalism”

- ❖ The idea that they are the only ones who matter.
- ❖ They were God's favorite; everyone else is secondary.
- ❖ “You become like us before you can belong with us.”

How Lost Their Missional Call?

- ❖ They had experienced too many years of special privilege.
- ❖ Fear of others they didn't know.
- ❖ Not intentionally engaging with those other people — who ever those “others” are.

A photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer over an open book. The hands are positioned in the upper right quadrant, with fingers interlaced. The book is open, showing text on the pages, and is positioned in the lower half of the frame. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light. The overall tone is contemplative and spiritual.

How Lost Their Missional Call?

- ❖ **Misunderstanding God — their God was an exclusive God — for them.**
- ❖ **Tradition had replaced vital faith.**



What Might Blessing Look Like?

- ❖ Intentionally engaging the outcast: (Jesus with Samaritan woman.)
- ❖ Living as Servant to all people: (Jesus at the Last Supper.)
- ❖ Making others' lives better because they've been around us: (Where ever Jesus went people were changed, healed.)

What Might Blessing Look Like?

- ❖ Stand with those who are marginalized: (Jesus touching the lepers.)
- ❖ Familiar example is Matthew 25:34-40, when Jesus returns to Earth:



Matthew 25:34

[Jesus]: “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’

Matthew 25:35-36

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

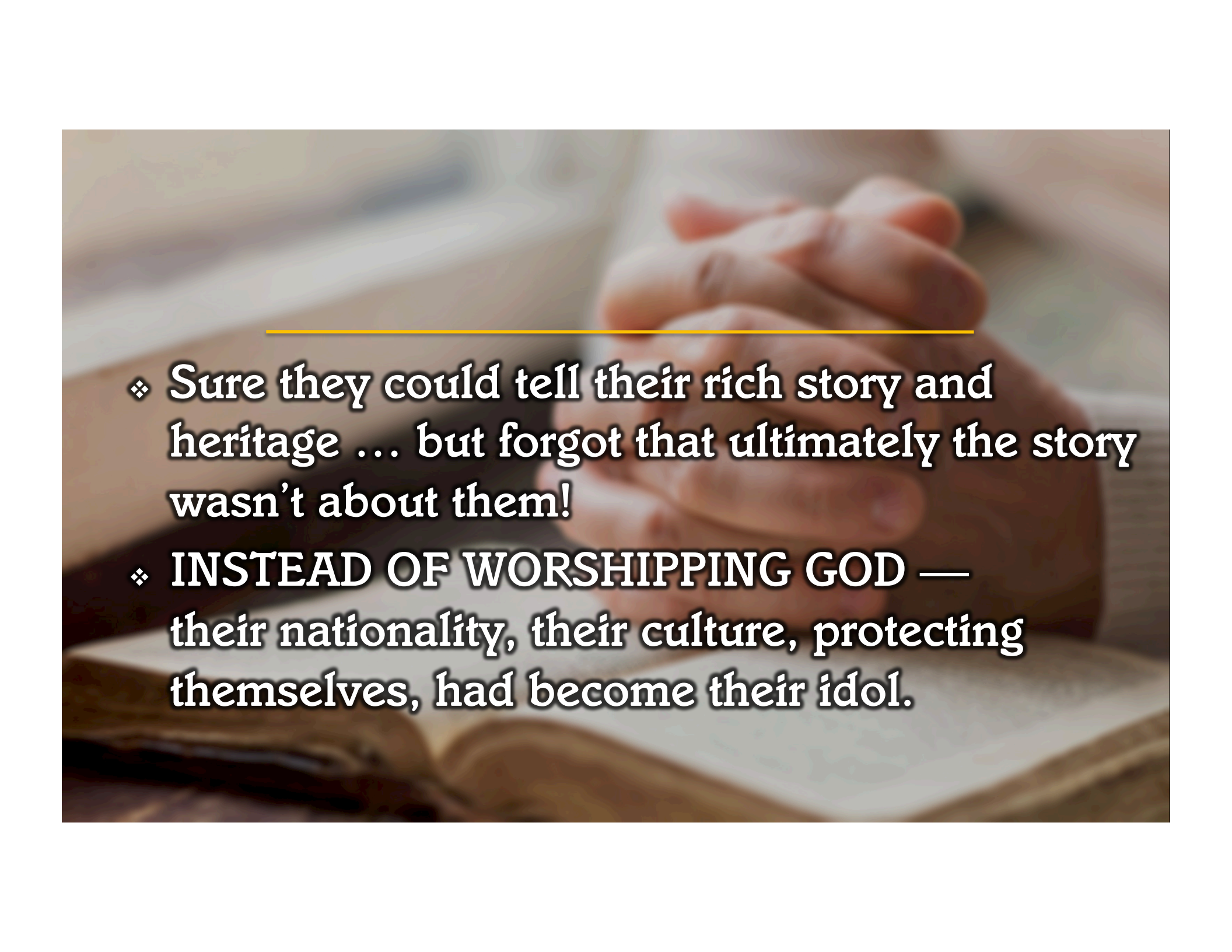
Matthew 25:37-39

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer, resting on an open book. The background is softly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the text. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font with a black outline.

Matthew 25:40

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

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- ❖ Sure they could tell their rich story and heritage ... but forgot that ultimately the story wasn't about them!
 - ❖ **INSTEAD OF WORSHIPPING GOD —** their nationality, their culture, protecting themselves, had become their idol.

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Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Acts 22:23-24

As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the commander ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and interrogated in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this.

Acts 22:25-26

As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?” When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. “What are you going to do?” he asked. “This man is a Roman citizen.”

Acts 22:27-28

The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes, I am," he answered. Then the commander said, "I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship." "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.



Acts 22:29

Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.

Grab the Opportunity

- ❖ Paul uses this for God's Kingdom advantage.
- ❖ Puts the commander on the defensive.
- ❖ Opens up future opportunities for Paul to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

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So What?

- ❖ God can powerfully use our Jesus-story.
- ❖ Using the gifts God has given us, for the sake of God's kingdom, opens doors to share God's love.



So What?

- ❖ God wants to actively heal our attitudes, values, prejudices, things that are not like Jesus.
- ❖ We can miss God's mission when we make life about us — excluding others. God's mission through us is to bless the world.





Are you being called?

- ❖ To receive Christ
- ❖ To become a member of Melbourne Community Church
- ❖ To pray / to receive prayer
- ❖ To affirm or reaffirm a commitment
- ❖ To receive the LORD's Supper