

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

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Years ago, early in my ministry I had the opportunity to go to Albania right after Communism was falling all across the Eastern Bloc and around the world. Albania was a very isolated country that had the most depressive Communist dictator this side of Stalin himself for many, many years. There was no underground church in Albania. Many parts of the country were cut off from the rest of civilization. They had no television, no radio and no highways. It would sometimes take two to three days to hike into some of the mountain villages.

My second or third trip there I began renting a helicopter that would take a team up into these remote villages that had never heard the gospel. And we would be dropped off early in the morning, and would stay there the entire day. We would try to introduce the villagers to Christ, and we would try to find out if any of them were old enough to even remember there being churches there.

One day we were dropped off in the mountains of Albania early in the morning, and as was the custom obviously, when you landed a helicopter on the side of a mountain in a remote place like that it would attract a lot of attention. It would only take a few moments before people would start running out of their homes to the clearing where we landed. And among the first people that would come to see us, or that we would be escorted to, would be the village chief. They had a term for that title in Albania that slips my mind right now, but it would be like the chief of a village.

In order to show them honor and respect you would be expected to go in and have a cup of coffee with them. And this would be a very strong Turkish coffee with the grounds in the bottom of the cup. I didn't realize what I was drinking the first few times I was there, and I couldn't understand why my heart felt like it was going to leave my chest, plus I didn't sleep the entire time I was there. But I learned that it was because of the coffee that I would drink with them.

I had an interpreter with us that I hired for the huge amount of one dollar per day, and he thought that was just wonderful. That was huge pay for them at that time. I became friends with my interpreter, and to this day we are very close. But this particular day was a unique day in that while we were there with the chief, there suddenly came in an elderly lady very urgently, and she said, '*Please let them come to my house. Please let them come to my house.*' She had found out that we were religious men.

So after a while the chief relented and he told us that this lady had had much tragedy in her life, and she would like for us to honor her by visiting in her home. So we took probably a thirty minute hike around a mountain trail to where she lived. And what I saw remains to this day perhaps one of the saddest and most difficult living situations I

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

have ever seen in my life. She lived in what could only generously be described as a hovel. It was two rooms with a door that was broken off of its hinges.

As I walked in, a pig walked out. And it didn't seem out of place. She escorted us into the second room which was kind of a combination living room/kitchen/bedroom area except there were only two chairs, a very broken down bed and a green chest that I can still picture in my mind. The chest had obviously been in her family for many, many years as it was old and broken down, and rotting.

She asked us to sit, but there were only two chairs so the other man and I sat in them. I looked over to the bed, and to my horror there was a form in the bed. It was a man who was probably in his mid-twenties, and he was profoundly mentally handicapped. He kind of woke up, then he stood up and he was naked except for a very ratty tee shirt. He tried to verbalize a little bit to us in a language that was not even translatable. Then he would go in and out of the room, very agitated, obviously in very difficult circumstances.

Now it was the custom in Albania that we would be offered some kind of refreshment when we were visiting. And that would always be an interesting moment as you realized you would be kind of taking your life in your hands. I will never forget what this lady served us that day. It was a national drink there that they made, and it was kind of a yogurt that was runny, and it would have what I can only describe as clots in it. So this lady reached into this unrefrigerated chest and pulled out two filthy glasses and this carafe of clotted yogurt and then offered it to us.

Maybe you have seen that commercial that was on during the Super Bowl of the chunky milk. Well, this was even worse than the chunky milk. She poured it, it just plopped into the glass, and then she handed us each a glass. I turned to my interpreter and I said, *'If I drink this, will it make me sick?'* And he replied, *'Oh, yeah.'*

Now I am kind of a picky eater, but I have eaten some really weird stuff on mission trips. Maybe by looking at me now you find it hard to believe that I am a picky eater. (*Laughter.*) But actually there are some things that I just can't manage to gag down. And when I am on a mission field I understand that it is important not to do things that might overtly be offensive, or unkind, or would be a cultural misstep.

And so I asked the interpreter, *'Is this woman expecting us to drink this?'* And he replied, *'Yes.'* And I said, *'Well, this is going to be a problem. I just don't think I can get this one down. Do you think you can drink it?'* And he said, *'I think I can.'* So I asked him what it was worth to him. (*Laughter.*) I told him, *'I've got a twenty dollar bill in my*

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

*pocket, and if you think you can drink this I will give it to you.’ He said, ‘I will give it a try.’*

So when the lady kind of turned her back for a minute, he grabbed my glass and glugged it. I can still literally remember seeing the chunk go down his esophagus because it was that big and that thick. Then he handed me the glass back and I said, *‘Um, delicious.’* And I am not lying, this guy was sick for three days afterwards, and I had to get a new interpreter during that time, because he was in bed. He is still a good friend of mine though and he lives in Houston, Texas. And every time I see him he says, *‘Remember the time I drank that milk for twenty buck?.’* And I always thank him again for doing that.

About that time another boy came into the room. He had been out somewhere and he came running in. And again, he was someone who was profoundly intellectually disabled. He could speak some, but it was still obvious that this was a tragic situation. This lady was completely impoverished. And I asked her if she had other family. The story unfolded through the interpreter that she had had a husband and three sons. And two sons were very mentally disabled. One day her healthy son and her husband were out working in a field on the side of a mountain and lightening had struck and killed both of them.

So they lived in this hovel and were completely dependent upon the good works of those around them to help them. They all slept in a single bed together. And she said, *‘Can you help us?’* The feeling of helplessness in such a situation like this is just overwhelming. We stayed and visited with her for over an hour, talking about where we had come from and we listened to her tell her story. I did not have the ability financially to cure her problems as it was well beyond anything I could have given her. If I had given her money it would have probably been taken by others, and there was nothing to buy anyway, because they lived so far out in the mountains. She couldn’t have purchased any comfort if she had had the money to buy it because it just wasn’t available there.

But I told her that I could tell her about this. And we talked about Jesus and how He was the great physician, the great healer, the great comforter. I told her that she was not forgotten, that there was one who could give her hope of a better future, that could give meaning to this existence, and a promise to something greater. And that day with her there, and the chief sitting nearby, and others in the village outside the door, we explained the gospel of Christ. And when we got up to leave to go back to the helicopter to fly back into a city that was hundreds of years ahead in terms of civilization, this lady grabbed me and hugged me. And through the interpreter she said, *‘Thank you, thank you for sharing this good news.’*

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

I have often wondered over the years what happened to this lady. Often when I am sitting down and thinking about all the amazing privileges that we enjoy in this country, I think about this lady. I also think about a man I met in India one day who was never able to leave his bed, because he was so profoundly handicapped. Or I think about the person in Vietnam that I met whose back was so crippled that he could only walk all bent over. And there was a little boy I met in Thailand who had no legs. There was another girl I met on another visit to Albania who carried with her an infant that was only a few months old. She would run up to those of us in the street, the Westerners, and at first I didn't even know what she was carrying in the little bundle. Then she would pull back the blanket and you could see the baby's face. This girl was one of many young children that were living on the street. I could see from my hotel room that they were burning cardboard boxes at night to stay warm.

I asked who these children were, and why there wasn't anyone caring for them. And they told me they were the children of gypsies. I asked where they got the babies because they were too young to be their mothers. And they told me that their siblings, and their parents would give the babies to them, and then teach them to put opium on their lips to drug them, so they would always be asleep when they were carried around by the young children. I asked why the children didn't go home at night, and they said they couldn't go home, because if they had not managed to beg or steal enough that day, they would be beaten, so they would stay on the streets overnight.

And I could literally for the next hour tell you of heartbreaking, tragic stories around the world that I have seen with my own eyes, of people that I have met who were in such desperate straits physically, emotionally, intellectually, and financially that it seemed that there was no hope available to them.

And this is the setting of the passage we are getting ready to read this morning. We started this series the first part of January and we will continue it throughout 2019, where we are seeing the very foundation of the local New Testament church that Christ Himself forged at Pentecost. This called our assembly, those who were trusting in Christ with a message of the gospel. And many times we look into situations and we think, *'How can we help here? There is no hope because our resources are limited. What is it we should consistently be saying and doing?'*

We have a little picture of that in Chapter 3 of Acts. So would you follow along with me as I read through this passage twice this morning? I am going to read through it as a block first right now. And then we are going to go back to do what is one of our core values, and that is expositional teaching, which means to explain. So we are then going to go verse by verse, line by line, and sometimes even word by word to study what this

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

passage is saying to us, so that we understand the context and message of what is going on here. And also this is to let the Holy Spirit have the opportunity to take the truth in the Scripture and apply it to our hearts personally.

Now I have read this passage many times before I began preparing for this message a couple of weeks ago, and I will read this passage again in the future, and many of you have done that also. But this is what I know, there are so many layers, so many dimensions, so many facets of what is going on here, that it is quite impossible to get all that there is out of it in one sermon, or by just reading it through several times. So may I ask you this morning, as we begin reading this passage, and as I try to give you at least one layer of it and one perspective for it, that you would ask the Holy Spirit to teach you something that is just for you this morning that you can apply this week. So please follow along as I read aloud beginning in verse 1 of Acts Chapter 3.

*“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, ‘Look at us.’ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’”*

*“And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”*

*“While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: ‘Men of Israel, who do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.’”*

*“But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And His name - by faith in His name - has made this man strong*

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

*whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”*

Now this passage that we are going to study this morning is not going to be the entire chapter, and Pastor Ben will come back next week and finish off this chapter, but it needs to be taken in the context of all that has been occurring. And as we see this passage unfold this morning I want you to think of it in three parts. First of all we have an explanation of the setting. It is where the event took place and it was very unique.

Then next we have a miraculous occurrence and that is the sign. Often what happens is we focus so much on the sign that we don't look at the next part, or even to whom this passage was directed to, and who was involved in this passage. And then after we have the setting and the sign we have a sermon. And we will get into the first part of the sermon, the introduction, kind of the attention grabber of the sermon, but there is a lot more to be said as this unfolds.

This is the second sermon that we have that Peter preached and this is a very powerful one that is being preached to people who largely had gathered together on their way to do religious deeds and to participate in religious activity. So keep your Bible open if you would, whether it is on your device or whether it is an old fashioned text, because we are going to go through this step by step - the setting, the sign and the sermon.

So let's look first at the setting in verse 1. ***“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.”*** So here is what is happening. They have left the Upper Room, and as we learned in Chapter 2, they have been out visiting, they have been in different homes, they have been breaking bread together, the church had taken off with over three thousand people professing their faith in Christ, and they have been baptized. People were talking in the streets, there was a general buzz in the community that something was going on, something was happening. Some thought it was political, others thought it was religious, while still others thought it was just an unusual outpouring of a bunch of people getting together and drinking too much.

There were all kinds of confusion about what was going on, but there was also kind of a sense of expectancy in the air. So two of the apostles of the twelve, remember there were twelve original apostles but Judas had betrayed Jesus. Then we learned in Chapter 1 that Judas was replaced so now there are twelve again. There were one hundred and twenty who met in the Upper Room until they received the Holy Spirit, and then after Peter preached there were over three thousand people who had been saved.

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

They now have this church that is absolutely exploding in growth. And there was still business to be conducted with people coming and going. And so John and Peter, two of the leading apostles, who had walked with Jesus, were going down to the temple during the time when many people were gathering for prayer. The Scriptures says in verse 1 that it was the ninth hour, which for us would have been 3 o'clock in the afternoon. When you and I think of the am and the pm, day and night, or when the new day begins, we think of midnight and that 12:01 am is the beginning of the new day. And then sometime around 6:00 am we start waking up, the sun comes up, and life starts beginning.

In Bible days they didn't look at the clock in those terms, but rather 6:00 am was the beginning of their day because that is when it became light outside. People woke up, they had breakfast, and they began to go about their business. And 6:00 am would have been the equivalent of our 12:01 am. And three times they set aside time for prayer. Remember that all through civilization, and included in Jewish tradition and culture, there was this ritual that was attached to religion. In many religions we see that there are times set aside on a daily basis to be devoted to prayer. In fact if you know any Muslims you know that about five times a day they will pray.

I remember again being in other countries and sometimes being awakened early in the morning or late at night by the sound of 'a call to prayer' being loudly played over speakers, as a reminder to all the devout Muslims that they were to stop what they were doing, to kneel and face Mecca, and to pray. Well, the Jews were not that much different because they had three times in the day that they were to stop what they were doing and to go to the temple and pray. And that was at 9:00 am our time, which would have been their third hour, then it was noon our time, which would be their sixth hour, and then it was 3:00 pm our time, which would have been their ninth hour. And they would gather together to pray at these times.

Remember this, one of the great lies of religion is that religion is nothing more than a ritual. That you can visit God from time to time, pay the price for your devotedness and your devotion, and then somehow that makes you a pious person. So the streets were filled with pious people rushing up to the temple for the time of prayer when this passage occurs. However, we know that Jesus said, and the apostles taught that prayer ought not to be something that we visit because it is a ritual, but rather a conversation that is ongoing with God. In fact we were told to pray without ceasing.

God is not interested in rules, God is not interested in regulations, God is not interested in ritual; He wants us to have a relationship with Him. And that relationship calls us to an ongoing and constant conversation with Him. And Peter and John were

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

there to confront that, to confront this piety, this sense of okay-ness that was part of their culture both civically and religiously.

Now please look in verse 2 where it says: “*And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.*” This was a man who had apparently never walked normally a day in his life. From the day of his birth he was dependent upon others. So he was so catastrophically crippled that, even as an adult, he had to depend on other people to carry him down to the temple. And there he could extend his hands to those walking by in hopes that they would give him a little bit of money for dinner that night and to pay the few bills that he would have.

The Bible says that he was laid by the Beautiful Gate of the temple. Now the Beautiful Gate is an unusual term and we don’t really understand what that meant. It may have been more of a description because none of the twelve gates that surrounded Jerusalem were officially called ‘the Beautiful Gate.’ It could have been the gate that was bronze and was very beautiful and ornate with all kinds of carving on it. That gate was polished and bright and it could be seen from a long distance. Many Bible scholars believe it may have been the Eastern Gate because of where they ended up. The Eastern Gate would have been significant because it was the gate that was closest to the temple complex. Today that gate is blocked with a cemetery on one side, and you can’t use that gate today. But in those days it would have been a primary way of egress into the city. It would have also taken them very quickly to the temple.

Maybe you wonder why that would have been significant and that is because people would be going to the temple often to offer sacrifices. And if they were going to offer sacrifices they probably had money in their pockets. A lot of the people didn’t have their own goats, sheep, doves or pigeons, so they would actually buy them from vendors that were outside of the temple complex. And they would come with their coins in their pockets ready to buy a sacrifice at a key time during the day.

So there would be all these pious people on their way to the temple with a sense of urgency not wanting to miss the prayer time, and they would walk by these poor people who were all positioned there. And the beggars would know first of all that the people passing by would have a heart for God, secondly they had money in their pockets to buy a sacrifice, and thirdly they were probably dealing with a little guilt for their sins. So this was just a prime location to be able to ask for alms. And this crippled man knew this, and he had been doing it for years. He had people come daily and carry him here to this strategic location.

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Now let's look at verses 3 through 5. "*Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, 'Look at us.' And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.*" So here we have this picture of a crippled man, who was probably lying on some kind of cot or bed of some kind, or maybe just on a pile of rags. And as he had done every day of his life, for years and years, his custom was to ask people passing by, '*Please, please give to the poor. Alms for the poor, please. Please, please help me. I need food.*'

He has done this so much that he is probably not even thinking about what he is saying. He isn't even looking directly at the people. And you will find that this is very true, if you have traveled to third world countries or to countries where civilization has not caught up yet, that it is not uncommon for the beggars on the streets to ask you for money, but to never look at you. And I never knew why that was, and as I looked at the passage this week I wondered why that was said here as well. Why was this man not looking at anyone? And why did Peter and John tell him to, '***Look at us?***'

Was the man not looking at anyone out of humility? Was it because he didn't want people to feel bad if they didn't give him money? Or was it just that he was weary from doing it day after day? '*Here we go again. Day after day I have to ask for alms so I can buy food. This is my life and my existence. I can't bear to look at these people as I humbly beg them for enough money to be able to buy bread for tonight.*'

But here is where the story changes as hundreds of people are walking by. I am guessing that this man wasn't the only beggar there that day. There may have been a whole row of them there. It could have been like Grand Central Station at Washington, DC or New York, where you will see all kinds of people wanting you to help them out. Peter and John are walking by and then all of a sudden they stop and say, '*Hey, guy, look at us. Look in our eyes.*' And they waited until the beggar lifted his head and looked in their eyes.

Now I have to wonder about all this detail here. It doesn't seem necessarily important details unless there was something important going on. What is it that God wants us to examine about that? What is it that He wants us to know? It just made me ask a whole bunch of questions while I was studying this, and I read a ton of different commentaries and I found that most of them skipped over it while only a few of them did have different theories.

But in studying this passage I had to ask myself a few questions about it. For instance, how many times have I walked by a genuine spiritual need without even giving them a glance? How many times have I done that? How many times have I been

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

unwilling to slow my stride enough to look at someone in their humanity, in the reality of their existence, in the conditions in which they find themselves? Beyond that, what changes happen when we look somebody directly in the eyes? What difference does that make? Is there a power, is there a connection, is there an occurrence that happens by simply looking someone in the eyes? And I am convinced that we lose opportunities all the time because we are satisfied with looking past people and only seeing the problem.

Now we can rationalize that by saying, *'I am just too busy. I don't have time to talk to everybody. I am overwhelmed. I have limited resources. I can't talk to everybody and I can't give to everybody. There is no way to help everybody; therefore I choose to just keep walking and not to look at them.'* But sometimes God wants us to stop and look people in the eye. And when we do there is a high likelihood that He is at work in them and in us.

Several years ago when I first moved to Charlotte, I became the pastor of a large church in town that was kind of high profile. The church had a reputation from the pastors that preceded me of speaking on moral and activist type issues. At that time the Charlotte Observer had an editor that focused only on religion; in fact they had a separate section for religious articles, because after all this is the Bible Belt. At that time newspapers were still flourishing, and they had an entire religion section in the paper every day. And then some days it was even in a separate pull out section, particularly on Sundays.

The editor, a guy named Ken Garfield, called me up as soon as I got moved in and said he wanted to meet me. So he came to the church and did a big story on me. It was kind of ironic because the title of the story was, 'Pastor Promises Shorter Sermons and Kinder Messages.' And I wish I had known the term 'fake news' in those days, because I am not known for my brevity if you are visiting today. *(Laughter.)*

But we became friends. I was an anomaly to him as he was not a Christ follower. He came from a Jewish background, but would have classified himself as more of an agnostic, so how he ever became a religious editor was interesting. He called me a misnomer as 'the thinking fundamentalist.' And fundamentalist in those days had a little different meaning than it does today. But we had these really intense conversations, particularly when something controversial would come up, and he would call me. And I always had to ask him, *'Am this on the record or off the record?'* If we were off the record we could have a candid conversation, but if we were on the record I had to be very, very careful because he was still a reporter and he had a job to do. So we kind of manipulated each other. I could give him phrases that I knew would show up in an article.

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Well, about that time there was something controversial going on in the city of Charlotte that had to do with gay rights and marriage definitions and so forth, and he called me and asked for a couple of quotes from me. And so I gave them to him. And in those days, and in my younger days, I was more interested in the explosion than I was the damage, and there were times when I would say things that I regretted, maybe in the way I phrased them. Even when I was positionally right, I could be obnoxious, I will put it that way. Now I can still be pretty obnoxious, but I have learned to be more careful of that.

But I knew how to give this religious reporter what he wanted, and he wanted some red meat. And I provided that for him, and of course it came out in the newspaper. And the next thing I knew my email and my phone lines were lighting up. I expected some of that, but then I got a particular email from a guy and he took it to a whole new level. He questioned my sanity, he questioned my Christianity, and he questioned my intellect, and it set me back a little bit.

Now this was pre-Facebook days, but I decided this could be fun. I sat down at my word processor and I was going to really give it back to him. But before I sent the email, thank the Lord, I looked at it and thought, *'This doesn't sound like Jesus, does it?'* And it didn't. So I hit delete and then went through two or three more attempts, and then finally I just sent him just a very brief email, and I said, *'It sounds like you are talking to someone I don't know, and I bet I am talking to someone I don't know. How about this? Let's meet for lunch.'*

Come to find out this guy was someone who worked for the Charlotte Observer too, but he was also one of the leading gay activists in the city. His name was Don and we met at the Pewter Rose Restaurant in South Charlotte. The conversation ended up lasting over two hours. I asked him questions, and he told me his story. He asked me questions, and I told him my story. But we looked each other in the eye, and do you know what we didn't do? We didn't call each other names, we didn't ignore each other's arguments, we just talked. When we finished our conversation I thanked him for meeting me, and I said that I knew I was probably someone he had never dreamed of having lunch with. And he said he was guessing I felt the same way about him. And I said he was right, but I was glad I did. I told him I felt like I had made a friend today, and he said he thought so too.

Then he said he wanted to ask me something. And he said, *'Would you pray for me? I have been trying to quit smoking for a long time, and I am just desperate because I want to quit smoking. Would you please pray for me that I can quit?'* And I told him that I would pray for him. And then I said, *'But I want to be honest with you. I am also*

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

*going to be praying for something else for you too. I am going to pray that Jesus will lead you to the truth of His Word, because I pray that for myself. I don't want to do anything that is inconsistent with the Scripture and with Him. I have things in my life I struggle with, and that I need to work on, and I think we all have to admit that. So I am just going to pray for you that you will be able to quit smoking, and that God will show His truth to you, and that you will be willing to listen. Is that okay with you?' And he said, 'I need all the prayers I can get.'*

Now I would like to be able to give you a really cool ending of this encounter and tell you that one day Don called and told me he was now a born again Christian, that he had repented and he was a changed man, but to my knowledge that didn't occur. We kept in contact for a couple of years, and then I moved back to Florida for a while and we lost contact. When I came back to this area I googled his name because I wanted to make contact with him, and I found his obituary that said he had died of lung cancer.

I do know that today because of that lunch, and because of my conversation with him, I want to look more people in the eye when I talk about spiritual things. I don't want to yell over the internet and I don't want to do a flame war. There is a part of me that is just the ornery, cantankerous guy who likes to joust verbally that I have to keep pushing down, but I know this, that when you look someone in the eye and talk to them about Jesus, God takes over and we get put down.

So I don't know why Peter and John told the crippled man to look them in the eye, but I know it was important, I know it was significant and I know what happened after that. So would you please look with me in verse 6 where it says: "***Peter said, 'I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!'***" See the man looked at them probably thinking they were going to give him money. And Peter told him that he didn't have any money, but what he did have he wanted to share with this man. And he told him to take his hand.

The transformation that was to occur that day was not purchased with coins. And I want to pause here just to remind all of us of this - we don't bring anything to the gospel ourselves. We don't bring money, we don't bring eloquence, we don't bring education, we don't bring charisma, we don't bring experience, we don't bring buildings and facilities and curriculum - we bring the gospel, the good news. And God doesn't need all the stuff that we think is so important to get the job done. All we need is truth and the Holy Spirit. And if you use any of those other things as an excuse to walk by those who have needs, then you need to reconsider that.

*'Silver and gold have I none, but let me say this - I have Jesus.'* Look with me now in verses 7 and 8 where it says: "***And he took him by the right hand and raised***

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

*him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.”* The healing was immediate, the healing was complete, the response was public and it was exuberant.

Make no mistake though, the purpose of this healing was not just so the crippled guy could start walking. That was just a pleasant side effect. That was just a bonus. That was a temporary reprieve on a life that would still eventually reach its conclusion, because it is appointed unto every one of us a time for us to die. So yes, it was good that this man was healed, and yes, it was good that the miraculous event occurred, and yes, it was good that for the rest of his life he didn't have to be carried down to the temple to beg for alms.

But the purpose of the healing was to serve as a point of conviction in a sermon that was getting ready to be preached. This was the sign that led to the sermon. But first they needed to draw a crowd, and so the miracle occurred. They didn't have Scripture available during those days so at this time before Scripture was completed those who had been in the presence of Christ, had seen His ministry, had been trained by Him, these men which today we call apostles, were given this unique sign gift set. And it validated their message as the foundation was being laid.

And so in HIS name they said this man could be healed. And God, in order to draw sinners to Himself, to see repentance occur, to validate the authority of the gospel message in these earliest days, imbued these men with this supernatural gift, that was special and important. Today, we have His sure Word right here. And we can preach that Word. And by the way, you could heal everybody on the planet, and if they don't believe this Word, it is still just temporary. The healing that has to occur is an eternal one and it is a spiritual one.

Now let's look at verses 9 through 11, where we will see the response of the crowd when all the people see this man walking and praising God. ***“And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.”***

There is an area of the temple complex outside of the building that had this colonnade on the side of it, and it was kind of a social gathering place. They didn't have chat rooms, or shopping malls, they just had this social area where they would gather. And the people were just astounded. *‘Remember that guy who always sat down by the Beautiful Gate who was crippled and he would beg for alms. Look at him, he is walking!*

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

*He looked up at these two men, they took his hand, and he stood up. And now he is jumping around, praising God and dancing.’ This was incredible. And people came running over to this area to see what happened. And now they get the sermon.*

Peter and John stand before them and Peter starts his sermon that we see in verses 12 through 15. ***“While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: ‘Men of Israel, who do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And His name - by faith in His name - has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”***

So Peter starts with this cool illustration. *‘Hey guys, if you can hear my voice I want to do a little history lesson here. Do you remember the guy that Pilate had on trial a few weeks ago? It was the King of the Jews fellow, the one who said He was the Messiah. Remember what you all said?’* Oh yes, they remembered. They had been the ones shouting *‘Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!’* They had chanted it as a bloodthirsty mob - point One.

Point two - Peter said, *‘Hey, do you remember when Pilate offered to let Jesus go. It was the time of the year where traditionally someone was released and their crime absolved. Do you remember when Pilate said that, and what you all said? You said, ‘Free Barabbas, free Barabbas and crucify Jesus.’* That was Peter’s second opening point to his sermon. And I have to think they are feeling pretty uncomfortable about now.

Peter had another point. He said, *‘Hey, do you remember Father Abraham, Father Jacob, and Father Isaac and then the one we called the author of life. Do you remember when you hung Him on a cross after He was beaten, spit upon, and then He died? Well three days later do you know what happened? God raised Jesus from the dead and we saw Him ourselves.’* That was Peter’s third point. Man, talk about an opening illustration! That was what was occurring here.

So these people were gathered in this area in the temple complex where they had come to do their religious things. They were going to give money, they were going to bring sacrifices, and they were getting ready to pray. And this poor crippled man who

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

had been carried there to beg for money day after day had been instructed to look at Peter and John. He then had his hand taken and he stood up, walking and praising God. He is shouting saying, *'Look at me, look at me. I have been healed.'*

And Peter told the crowd that this healing had been done in the name of Jesus and now they were to listen to him. He told them what they needed to know. *'You guys messed up. This man that you had crucified, this man that you had killed, was buried but He rose again the third day. This man was Jesus, and He is the one you need to know.'* He was getting ready to preach a wonderful gospel message to which they will respond.

But let's pause here and let's learn some lessons as we conclude. The first thing is this - we would do well if we would accept people where they are and love them to where they need to be. We have to accept people where they are and then love them to where they need to be. It is easy in this passage to focus on the crippled man because that is a cool story, right? A man who had never walked before in his life can now walk. To this day that would fascinate us. But we can miss the whole crux of the story, the whole passage, and the whole purpose that God brought it together for if all we remember is a crippled man gets healed.

The crippled man was just an instrument. He was the object lesson. That was his part in this passage. But he was not the only one that mattered that day. This was the message, not just for the crippled man, but for the Jews, for the travelers, for the merchants, for the priests, for the cynics, for the skeptics, for the non-believers, for the people who thought they were pious, for the people who thought they were righteous, and for those who thought they were beyond hope. This message was not just for the crippled man; it was for everybody there, everybody in the city. It was for the ones on their way to the temple, the ones on the way to the market, the ones that were there to help out, everybody needed to hear this message.

And in this message Peter would say, *'You guys are looking at us like we made that happen. And you are wrong. That one that you had arrested, that one that you wouldn't release, that one whom you murdered, it was in His name that this healing occurred. Make no mistake, you are accountable.'* Every single day each one of us are walking among people who are crippled and broken, skeptical and cynical, pious and practiced, busy and distracted. And yet from time to time God gives us an audience in the midst of the throng and says, *'Lift up my name. Point people to me.'*

There are none so broken, there are none so important, so lovely, so poor, so wealthy, so lowly, so forgotten, so famous, so addicted, so powerful, so dependent, so independent that the answer is different for them than it is for the rest of us. And it is for this reason that we must pause and see beyond the human condition and take note of each

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

and every one of our own spiritual conditions. And invite others to hear that name which will take them to where they need to be. And that name is Jesus.

I wish I could cure every ailment. I hate cancer, I hate poverty, I hate addiction, I hate abortion, I hate human trafficking, I hate exploitation, I hate racism, I hate hatred, I hate all those things, but do you understand that all those things are symptoms of an even greater need and that is our brokenness before God. And there is a plan that has been put in place that unlocks the key of our brokenness and we can rise and walk in freedom and in hope.

Why doesn't God stop all of this now? Do you know why? It is because He is merciful, because at the moment it is all over, no one else will be able to repent, no one else will be able to get forgiveness, and no one else can be rescued. The plan, the invitation God makes for us to repent and to receive Him will be over and then what's done is done. So God in His mercy allows us today to walk amidst the pain, the hurt, the poverty, the injustice, the crime, the exploitation and the hatred, and say, '*There is a name and His name is Jesus.*' And I say this to all of us today, if you have never trusted in that name, today is your day. He has His hand out and all you have to do is take it and live. Repent, the Scripture says, quit depending on yourself, and trust in Him. We invite you to do that today.

And for those of us who like Peter and John know the truth and we walk in the midst of this chaos of need and the needless, in the midst of the people who think they have it together and the people who are so broken that they think there is no solution, what do we need to do? We need to tell them, '*Look at me and let me tell you about Jesus.*' Accept people where they are and love them to where they need to be.

If they are broken; they need to see Jesus. If they are indifferent; they need to see Jesus. If they are hostile; they need to see Jesus. If they are skeptical; they need to see Jesus. If they are self-righteous; they need to see Jesus. If they are pompous; they need to see Jesus. If they are addicted; they need Jesus.

And even if they go to Life Fellowship Church they may just be playing a game, so they need Jesus. Maybe they are hypocritical, phonies and frauds who go to the temple, but they still need Jesus. We can't ever lose sight of that because the other side of that is despair and hopelessness, and Jesus has a message and it is this - '*Repent, repent and trust me.*' Accept people where they are and love them to where they need to be.

The second thing is - address flawed thinking, attitudes, actions and love, but with clarity. Address this flawed thinking, flawed attitudes and flawed actions. To the cripple

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Peter gave hope. To the guy who thought he had to be at prayer at exactly 3 o'clock in the afternoon Peter said to relax. He had a message for him. To the guy who had business to conduct Peter said to stop and listen. To the guy who was on his way to do business with God, Peter said God was here right now for him. So address all the flawed busyness, the paraphernalia and instead speak the truth in love. Peter said, '*You guys killed Him, and you are going to have to deal with that.*' And do you know what we have to deal with? We have to deal with our sin. We are messed up and we can't save ourselves.

The third thing is this - always focus on the person of Jesus in everything we do for others. We need to be generous. We need to give. We need to get out our wallets. We need to go. We need to help the homeless. We need to get involved in people's lives. We need to reach the people who are poor and addicted and hurting and broken. But at the same time we need to understand that if we do any of that apart from Jesus then we are just social workers.

Jesus said, "***The poor you are always going to have with you.***" There is always going to be poverty. There is always going to be injustice. Why? It is because we live in a broken and fallen world. The solution is not money and it is not good works. That doesn't mean we shouldn't give our money, or that we don't do good works, but the lasting permanent solution is Jesus. He changes us from the inside out. So we need to focus on Him.

Finally - anticipate results that cannot be explained as anything less than supernatural. When God does what God is going to do, stand back because it is going to get crazy. It is going to be big. Stop and think where you might be today if it were not for Christ in your life. Do you ever do that? When I think about where I might be apart from Jesus it scares me. I grew up in the hills and hollows of the Midwest. My background certainly would not have lent itself to huge success or opportunity or accomplishment. But even if it had, if I lived in the finest house in New York or San Francisco or Miami Beach, and lived apart from Jesus, when I died it would have meant nothing.

Have you ever considered what a blessing it is that we live in a country where we can hear this gospel and know this Jesus and live the way we live, with the privileges we enjoy? Can we not share that with others? What has happened to you and me is every bit as supernatural as what happened to that the crippled man in today's passage, and it ought to cause an excited response in us that is deep as if we had never walked a day in our entire life, and then one day we are dancing. The transformative work of the gospel in our lives will last forever.

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

The end of the story for this guy who was healed was that he died. We don't even know where his grave is today. We don't even know his name. But what we do know is that he is in Heaven. And you and I today have to decide what we are going to do with truth, how we are going to apply it, and how we are going to live it.

Early in the message I said this - God has something He wants you to hear. Have you identified it yet? What it was that God wanted you to hear may not have been anything I have said; it may have been just something that you realized God wanted you to do. So now what are you going to do about it? We are going to close after we sing a couple of songs and then we are going home. But before we do, we need to check our hearts. So here is my question. Do you know Christ as your Savior? If you died today do you know for sure you would go to Heaven? Do you have a relationship with Him?

Maybe you would say, *'Dan, I want that but I just don't know where to go, or how to start? I don't want to be the typical religious person. I don't want to be the person who just goes through the motions. I want to have a real relationship with Christ.'* If that is you, here is your good news. We are going to show you from the Bible what it means to be a Christ follower. We can't force you to do it. Don't bring your pen because you are not going to have to sign a contract. Don't bring your wallet because you are not going to have to give money. It has nothing to do with that.

But we want to show you from the Bible what God's Word says you should do in order to trust Christ. It is very simple. And when we stand in just a moment I will be standing right over there with some of our elders. If you will come to one of us, take our hand and tell us you want to meet this Jesus, we will have someone take you a private room and we will show you from the Bible what it means to be a Christ follower. Will you do that? We have people who do this on a regular basis, and today is your turn. Please do that.

Maybe others of you would say, *'Dan, I know Christ as my Savior, but you have been talking about Scripture saying you need to be baptized in Acts Chapter 2, so what do I need to do to be baptized?'* If you will just come up here we can get that taken care of. We are going to have a class next week and then have a baptismal service in three weeks. So why don't you come and let's talk about what how baptism is a public statement, that moment that points to Jesus. You ought to do that.

So you can come forward, or you can take the Connect Card in front of you and fill it out with your contact information, mark that you want to be baptized, and we will contact you tomorrow. But take care of that business please. There are going to be at least ten people we know who have said they want to be baptized. You can come on and do that as well.

**THE POWER OF HIS NAME - ORIGINS SERIES**  
**PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Another thing is - do you know someone who is far from God but close to you and you need to be praying for them. At each of the tables where communion is served we have a basket. You can take your Connect Card, write the person you are going to pray for on it, and while we are singing you can leave that card on the table and start praying for that person. I have two people that I am praying for every day that is close to me and far from God, and I am praying God will reach down and have that Jesus moment with them. Will you join me in that?

The next thing is this - what is it that God wanted you to do and hear today? Are you guilty of walking by the people in your life and not giving them any eye contact? Who this week should you buy a meal for in Jesus' name? Who this week should you invite to lunch? Who this week should you stop yelling at and start looking at? Who this week has offended you and you need to sit down and with a have a quiet conversation with? Who is it that if you could pick anyone in the world you would not want to spend a moment with that you need to go and spend a moment with them? For your sake and for theirs, who is it that you need to spend time with eye to eye? And then hopefully they will be able to see Jesus better in your eyes than in your life or in your words lately. What is it that God would have you to do?

Communion is available as always. We also will be here to pray with you if you have something going on in your life and you need prayer. If you have anything you want to talk about or pray about and you don't want to come over here, just go out the door to your far right and there is a room that says 'Prayer Room.' Go in there and someone will be waiting for you. Whatever you do if God is speaking to your heart don't resist Him. He is calling your name. All we have to do is say 'Yes.' Let's stand as we pray.

*Father, we love you. Thank you for your Word. Help us, Father, to never walk by the crippled man. Father, help us to hear you because it is all about you. Father, help us to quit shouting at each other and avoiding eye contact, and Father, let our words be your words eye to eye with those who need your gospel. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.*

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*