



My Pain, Your Pain

by Dan Siemens

I have been associated with the Lutheran Renewal community for over 13 years. I have a question that has often been like a splinter in my mind:

"What, dear Reader, do you do with your pain?"

What do people who say they love and value the renewing and healing work of the Holy Spirit do when their experience of pain and suffering flies in the face of their renewal culture? Ours is a culture which places a high value on physical healing, emotional wholeness, and victory over the darkness.

Maybe such a question is the equivalent to the proverbial pink elephant sitting on the coffee table in the middle of the renewal living room. There it sits, big as life, yet acknowledged by few.

After a conference when prayers are prayed, and songs are sung, books and tapes purchased, and meetings are done... when you go home and face life's reality, what do you do with your pain?

Of course, it's obvious that even renewal folks cannot escape the pain and suffering in this life. Jesus himself assured us that "in this world, *we will have* tribulation." Jesus said it. I believe it, and so should you. We don't need to live in denial concerning this reality.

Please don't misunderstand me. I believe God heals us body, soul and spirit, and I don't believe in suffering for its own sake. Over the years I have prayed for many people for physical healing. I have also seen hundreds of people prayed over by our incredible prayer ministry team, not to mention all of the healing prayers offered by anointed 5-fold teachers who graciously come and minister at our conferences. Some people are absolutely, genuinely, no-doubt-about-it healed, and there is an even greater healing anointing during seasons of Holy Spirit outpouring.

Still, in spite of all of these prayers *combined*, this fact remains: *few are physically healed*. Travel to any healing center around the country you choose. There is a huge chasm between the numbers of those who are completely healed physically and those who are not.

There. I said it, and it's ok for you to acknowledge this fact as well. You are not in unbelief; you can still believe in revival. You will not go to hell. This is simply the reality.

Of course, at the same time, we must also state that while relatively few are physically healed, multitudes are spiritually and emotionally healed, touched, refreshed, and encouraged by God's love. Deliverances regularly occur and many people are filled with the Spirit at every conference.

But even then, many more still leave our healing meetings with severe emotional pain, distress, and depression as well as the sickness in their physical bodies that have not been restored. If this fact has never been cause for angst in your soul and has not initiated all-night wrestling matches with the Lord, then you have not been paying attention.

We have all heard the glorious tales of healing testimonies from the front stage, but we rarely hear the tragic stories from those dear folks who earnestly seek and keep seeking, but for reasons unknown, do not receive.

You might be asking, "If what you are saying is true, then why should we bother to pray at all?"

Despite these observations, I am in no way inferring that we should discontinue our efforts to persist in what we know to be God's will in heaven that should be rigorously sought to be done on earth. But, I am saying that there is another reality that the renewal community often seems afraid to address by its silence: that being engaged in the healing ministry requires that we be willing to live in a kind of *tension* that we dare not ignore, trivialize, or seek to alleviate simply because it makes us uncomfortable.

In the center of this tension lies *reality*. God can always be found in reality, but never in the la-la-land of our idealism or wishful thinking, no matter how sincere, anointed, or theologically astute we may be.

So what exactly is this reality when it comes to physical healing?

It is simply this: we live and pray in the hope of a Kingdom that is "*already—but not yet*."

Already—but not yet. Like small, green plants barely pushing up their young, tender tips as the small harbingers of spring, Kingdom signs appear here and there, announcing its ever-expanding presence, but the flowers themselves have not yet come into full bloom. Living out our lives in the midst of this

delayed arrangement is what it means to live in this age. God's "kingdom come" is currently a *divine infection, but not yet divine perfection*. Ours now is only a taste of the powers of the coming age (see Hebrews 6:5).

Therefore, living in this tension of the "already—but not yet" will always be in some measure part of our current experience until that Wonderful Day when The Perfect finally comes to bring us into the ultimate fullness and beauty of a mature Kingdom Bloom.

Romans 8:23 clearly expresses this reality: "...we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, **groan inwardly as we wait eagerly** for our adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Did you notice that huge, liminal space between the words, *groan inwardly*...and ...*wait eagerly*? That is where we all live right now. And that is also the only reality where we can access the abundant grace we need in order to abide in Christ as we "wait patiently" in hope for His Fullness to appear.

Those of us who care about the healing ministry within the renewal community need a theology where we can unashamedly embrace the Kingdom mandate to pray boldly, asking God for even more to be healed. At the same time, we must also come to grips with the fact that *renewal people will experience suffering*. We may not even know why we must suffer. Those who are not healed following prayer should not have to hide in shame or lurk in conference halls like renewal pariahs. What is even worse is when they are made to feel like God doesn't love them, or that they are missing His plan, or that He is ignoring them in their pain because He apparently keeps passing them over when the prophetic words for healing are being handed out during a meeting.

Could it be that the path of pain and suffering for the Spirit-honoring community is something we must also learn to embrace as an important part of our spiritual journey? Is this what it requires to live authentically in the "already—but not yet"?

The good news is that there is tremendous freedom, and even joy, to be appropriated in a place of pain. After all, what makes walking with Jesus so incredibly wondrous is that everything in our lives, whether we understand it or not, has been given *redemptive potentiality*. As His beloved children, everything is made useful to God. He is the consummate Heavenly Ecologist—He wastes nothing. Everything is recyclable and potentially can be turned into Glory. Indeed, as Franciscan Richard Rohr boldly claims for every child of God, "*Everything belongs*."

Dan Allender expresses it this way in *The Healing Path*: "...none of us escapes the heartache of living in a fallen world. To live is to hurt. If we fail to anticipate thoughtfully how we will respond to the harm of living in a fallen world, the pain (we experience), may be for naught. It will either numb us or destroy us rather than refine or even bless us. Suffering need not destroy the heart; it has the potential to lead to life."

So, ask yourself: "**What do I do with my pain?** Can God's ultimate purpose still be realized in that place? As a beloved son or daughter, when I encounter the circumstances of life which offer no escape from suffering, can I simultaneously be grounded in the deepest peace and redemptive care of my God?" Your answers to these questions may be some of the most important of your Christian journey.

While a few may have a glorious testimony of physical healing on this side of heaven, every one of us can have a glory-producing testimony for all to see. Pain, both physical and emotional, that comes storming into our lives accompanied by suffering from which we cannot escape places the child of God in the unshakable grasp of our ultimate Healer. He is able to miraculously utilize all things in order to transform us into the glorious image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-30).

Therefore, walking in Jesus' footsteps requires that we learn to embrace both healing and suffering as long as we are in this world. This is the great encouragement of Romans 5:2-3: "...we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God...AND...we also rejoice in our sufferings..."

Whether we are pressing in to pursue healing as a foretaste of heaven, or we are asking our Emanuel to surround and embrace us while He makes the most of our sorrows, the driving force sustaining each quest is a Spirit-empowered *hope and rejoicing*.

That's where I want to learn to live, anyway. What about you?

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