

# The I.A.A. Syndrome: Injured, Angry and Alienated!

~A teaching concerning the wounded, hurting believers in the Body of Christ~

*"If someone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your body?' he will answer, 'The wounds I was given in the house of my friends'" (Zechariah 13:6, NIV).*

When the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem, he came with compassion, power, and the Word of God. You would have thought that his own people would have loved him unconditionally, but instead the very people he came to unify turned on him, rejected him and crucified him. Only after he rose from the dead and sent anointed representatives to share the truth did many of them see what they had done to their own. The Bible tells us that Jesus will continue to bear the wounds he received in the house of his friends through all eternity as tokens of his sacrifice for those he loved (**John 20:25-28**).

Jesus took those wounds so that his followers would not have to suffer them. But today, as it happened in Jesus' time, believers are again being wounded in the house of their friends, inside the very church of God, and as a result, many have become **I.A.A.**: Injured, Angry, and Alienated.

## **The Process...**

Today, there are a large number of saints who no longer fellowship with whole, complete church bodies under God-ordained leadership; instead, they have settled for fragmented fellowship with a few others of like mind, or they simply stay at home and fellowship with a televangelist on TV. We all know them: They are the ones who were on fire in the body, showing great promise, loving open fellowship with other believers, and submitting willingly to a called church leader. But something made them leave. Now we hear about them having "service" in small, fragmented groups, gathering with a very select group of believers in someone's home or garage, seeking for legitimacy with unique scriptural interpretations, fervently defending their actions to anyone who dares to question them.

What happened to them? We ask. Most of the time, the answer is this: We, the Church, happened to them. Somewhere along the line, they were injured in the house of their friends, tender reeds crushed by "spiritual" brothers and sisters, deceived by false teachings, misused and injured through spiritual abuse and/or bad leadership.

But how does this happen? Indeed, there is a process, and we have all seen it happen one way or another. Sometimes it's a babe in Christ who joins a body of believers, bonds with the saints and leaders, trusting in the ministry. But the church neglects to deal with their past hurts and wounds, putting them to work in the church before seeing them delivered from their damage or raised from their immaturity. Other times it's a mature believer who has been used by the church leadership they trusted, sexually, financially or emotionally, then discarded and rejected by the body when the truth is revealed, while the leader is forgiven and protected. Or maybe it's a sincere believer who gets a hold of some bad teaching, but instead of being lovingly corrected, they are gossiped about, rejected and avoided, left to their deception and confusion.

Either way, the results are usually the same: they end up deeply injured and hurt, wounded in spirit, their trust broken, their faith shaken. The Bible tells us that of all the wounds someone can experience, spiritual wounds are the most damaging, because it is the spirit of a man that gives us life to our body and soul: *"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14).*

What usually follows an injured spirit is a heart of bitterness, frustration, unforgiveness, mistrust, and anger. While this may be considered a natural reaction, it is also a dangerous one. Why? Because these very emotions can poison a person's heart. This is what the Bible warns us against: *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12:14-15).*

Understand this, Beloved: it is not the trouble upon us that causes separation from God and brethren, but our reaction to that trouble which brings damage to our spirit! Think about it: when you are mistreated or hurt, do you forgive or hold a grudge? Do you give it to the Lord or do you plot revenge? Do you release it or do you keep it bottled up inside, the memory burning in your mind? How we respond determines the condition of our heart. When you see someone who was once friendly, faithful and trusting becoming distant, defensive and doubtful, you have probably met someone who has buried past hurts in their heart, and is now reaping a harvest of bitterness and anger!

"But surely they are justified to feel that way," some might say. "After all, look at what was done to them." Beloved, no matter what they've experienced, the answer is *never* anger and unforgiveness: that is Satan's way, and when we adopt his ways, we give him a right to have access into our lives! (**2 Cor. 2:11-12, John 5:6-14**). No, bitterness and anger only further injure the one who holds it, opening them up to spiritual attack and deception which will lead them to the third step in the I.A.A. process: *alienation*, or separation from the body.

## **The Spirit of Alienation...**

*"Now the acts of the sinful nature are obvious: selfish ambition, dissensions, factions..." (Gal. 5:19-20, NIV).*

Understand this about the I.A.A. process: once you see a saint bound up in bitterness, anger and hurt, you see someone who will probably separate themselves from fellowship with the body. Now, the Bible clearly teaches us that there is indeed a time, a method and a reason for saints to separate from one another. It teaches that the church as a body should separate itself from those who are gossipers and disobedient to the word (**2 Thess. 3:11-15**), those who will not repent of sexual sins (**1 Cor. 6:1-13**), and those who are argumentative and divisive (**Tit. 3:9-11**), just to name a few. But there are also examples of separations that the Bible does not approve of. The church of Corinth was chastised for dividing over who baptized whom (**1 Cor. 1:10-13**). So this much is clear: there is proper reasoning for separation, as well as improper reasoning. The question is HOW and WHY it is done. It should be clear that when you see someone separate in anger, bitterness and mistrust, this is definitely the wrong way! What's more, these injured believers, who have not exactly fallen away from Christ, seek to continue fellowship, but on a level they feel "safer" in, more in control of. As a result, we are seeing many small groups of saints from broken fellowships and angry separations, gathering in the safety of their homes.

"Is that wrong?" you might ask. "Just because it was started from a broken fellowship with another body doesn't mean it's not of God." And this is true, saints. Just because a fellowship came from another body doesn't make it wrong. But here is an important question you must ask regarding any work claimed to be of God: What was it birthed in? How did it come about? In other words, was it the result of angry, bitter feelings spilling over into alienation, or was it truly spirit led separation? Remember this, beloved: God's church does NOT grow by division, but by multiplication. His works are never birthed in fleshly, carnal attitudes of bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness!

*"But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from Heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere..."*  
**(James 3:14-17, NIV).**

Herein lies the major deception of those who have been injured in the church: instead of forgiving those who have hurt them and seeking God's will on what to do, they will get a 'revelation,' and simply break fellowship with that body. But they won't stop there: they will usually try to take a few other believers with them, self-righteously believing that they are doing the will of God by 'rescuing' other saints and poisoning them against the ministry with their own bitterness! When you see a fellowship that is birthed like this, you are seeing a fellowship that is poisoned from the very start. This is not godly separation: it is alienation, separation resulting from injury and anger!

In **Gal. 5:19-21**, the Bible describes three different works of the flesh that bring alienation: they are called *selfish ambition* (or strife), *dissensions* (or seditions), and *factions* (or heresies).

Whenever you see a person operating in *strife*, you see someone who, for their own motives, provokes others to anger and suspicion, causing people to choose sides, bringing separation by strife and uproar. When you see *seditions*, you see someone who holds set views on issues, but instead of seeking peace they will attempt to draw others to see their point of view. Where there are *heresies*, you will find someone who claims to have revelation from God but is teaching lies; they cause division by challenging leadership and spreading false teaching, deceiving people into following them.

Beloved, each of these fleshly works lead to cliques and camps in a ministry, small gatherings of believers within a church body who gather mostly with themselves, believing that they are somehow special, "holier" than the rest of the body. They defend one another, support one another, and when one is offended, they follow one another. Why? It is usually because they share a common opinion, understanding, or injury, and have become their own "church body"!

### ***The Need for Complete Fellowship...***

When God designed the Church, He had a specific design in mind: it would have undershepherds, leaders of various spiritual giftings, called by God to nurture, guide, and prepare the saints for service (**Eph. 4:8-11, 1 Cor. 12:1-7**), and ministering saints who would carry out the various works of the body, ministering to the Lord, the church and the world (**Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18**). It would function according to the Word, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. Although many-sided and spread throughout the world, it would be of one mind, heart and purpose, a model of God's love and unity to the entire world. When wounded, it would heal its members with forgiveness and love. In other words, it would be **ONE**.

When a body operates along these lines, it is a joy to behold. But when it does not, you will have divisions, splits, and injury. One of the worst deceptions that a wounded saint can have is to believe that they can heal on their own terms. Think about it: when we break a bone, do we not set it in a cast so it may heal properly? The cast supports the bone and helps it to heal in the shape it was originally designed for. But if left to heal on its own, it will be crooked and weak, unable to function the way it was intended to. This is what happens to injured saints who break fellowship in a damaged condition; instead of placing themselves in the "cast" of a

strong, healthy body of believers, they make their own cast. How do we know they've healed crookedly? Because they have difficulty fellowshiping and trusting; the least bit of pressure and they crumble and break, running back to their home-made, fleshly cast, the only one they feel they can wear, the only one they are comfortable with or trust.

Beloved, that "home-made cast" is not what Jesus prayed and died for; it was Jesus' prayer that we "*would all be one*," even as he and his Father were one (**John 17:20-21**). Jesus wanted to see unity! This doesn't mean that we all need to cram ourselves in the same church building, but it does mean that we should have the same mind and spirit toward one another (**Phil. 2:1-5**). Saints, we need one another! This is not the time to separate and split, but the time to join forces! When you love someone, you will fellowship as much and as often as possible. It is inevitable! Let us draw near to one another in love!

~Pastor Ron Barnes