

One of the elements of my mission for the Kingdom is to spend time when needed to counsel those whose spirit had been injured through the ill treatment by others. The life of the Way is not one that keeps you from incurring damage as you walk through, but one that teaches you how to survive it through the power of God.

We cannot always prevent damage due to the element of sin in the world, so sometimes we have to be involved in a type of spiritual damage control. We all cause pain and hurt (damage) in the lives of others (some of us do this more than others). But we must try to heal the harm that others do, and hope that someone helps us work on the damage that we cause.

Sometimes we have to work with those who can't make it to the safety zone of the fellowship for one reason or another. Many times this is the result of damage that was caused or allowed by one of the members there.

I believe that we must occasionally forsake the assembly of that fellowship¹ so that we can work this damage control. That doesn't mean that we just quit going, but that at times our efforts are directed more to hurting individuals without the distraction of a group. Generally, those who cause the damage are not brought into any kind of judgment.

Somehow, like our responsibility to help widows and orphans², we must find ways to protect fragile souls. Worship may be magnified in our assembly (temple or synagogue), but fulfilling God's intention for expressing our worship occurs mostly on the outside. Jesus often referred to the idea that worship should be performed in spirit and in truth³.

When Jesus presented His parable of the Good Samaritan⁴, He made it clear that the official worshippers (the priest and the Levite) could not separate their compassionate behavior with others from their commitment to perfect practice of their perception of the law – surely (in their minds) they had important business at the temple! If you asked the Samaritan why he wasn't worshipping Mt. Gerazim⁵, he might have said that he was doing damage control. Remember the temple-goers passed by on the other side so that they wouldn't miss their "service" (what an odd word in this instance!). But someone was hurt and possibly dying. What has the highest priority? The 'religious' people wouldn't have even let the Samaritan into the temple, but he was the one caught in the act of healing.

Jesus was actively engaged in damage control during His ministry. He spent plenty of time in the synagogue and temple, but he also went out personally to touch individual lives of those who had been damaged in one way or another. For instance, when the man born blind was cast out of the presence of the Pharisees (and thus out of the fellowship of the synagogue⁶), he sought him out to reveal himself as the Messiah.

When the woman was caught in the act of adultery⁷ he dispersed the hypocrite crowd and counseled with her. Similarly, the woman who anointed Jesus and washed his feet with her hair⁸ was scorned by the Pharisees but forgiven by Him. These women were likely not even allowed to participate in community worship.

In a way, our sin has hurt God, and there must be damage control performed. Christ is represented as our scapegoat that is cast outside the camp⁹. The damage seemed to be complete as Christ was crucified on the cross. But God worked the ultimate damage control as Christ was resurrected. This is damage control is powerfully effective for us all.

In another sense, Christ came back to his disciples to offer damage control after the apparent loss of their Teacher. He spoke to Mary Magdalene shortly after His resurrection¹⁰ and walked with those traveling to Emmaus¹¹ to comfort them. He slipped through the locked doors to meet with the disciples as a group¹² at least twice as they locked themselves in for protection. Ultimately, He sent us the Holy Spirit as a permanent Comforter¹³.

We must be concerned with the spiritual lives of those who have suffered hurt (not those rebelling against God) and are in danger of dying spiritually. It is our mission to bring them back into the fold, even if we must leave the fold from time to time to search diligently for them¹⁴. We may have to go out into the highways and hedges and encourage them to come into the fellowship¹⁵. Our Lord, by His own actions, is calling for us to get our damage control efforts into action, and one day we will ask for our report.

1. Hebrews 10:24.
2. James 1:27 (and many Old Testament references).
3. John 4:24.
4. Luke 10:25-37.
5. John 4:21.
6. John 9:22 and 34.
7. John 8:1-11.
8. Luke 7:36ff.
9. Hebrews 13:13.
10. John 20:11 and 18.
11. Luke 24:13ff.
12. John 20:19 and 26.
13. John 14:16, John 14:26, John 15:26, and John 16:7.
14. Matthew 18:12-13 and Luke 15:4-7. Perhaps the wayward sheep had been hurt by someone else in the flock.
15. Luke 14:23.