

## **Prayer Transformation Ministries Email Newsletter – Teaching for 4/18/07**

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### **The Biggest Tragedy**

The events of this week at Virginia Tech illustrate the growing tragedy of sin permeating our society. As more is learned about the circumstances surrounding the shooting, questions are being raised about how it could have been prevented. If people had acted on warning signs of bizarre behavior or if officials had made different security decisions, *perhaps* some deaths could have been avoided. But only perhaps.

The reality is that this tragedy illustrates a greater spiritual struggle in our world. Leonard Ravenhill (considered one of the greatest authorities on revival) summarized the reality of this week's tragedy in a sermon preached years ago: "The biggest tragedy in the world tonight is a sick church in a dying world...There is no hope for the world unless the church is revived."

### **Painful Truths**

Those are hard words to hear: the hope of the world is dependent on our own hearts. But aren't we as a church doing well with our ministries, plans, and programs—and are we not truly making a difference in society? This is not to disparage or take away from the many wonderful things happening in the name of Christ. But we need ask ourselves some hard questions about our true impact on society.

Is it possible that the growing sickness in our society of young people and children being massacred is somehow connected to the true condition of the Church? If Jesus were here today, it seems He would be obligated to make this same declaration: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate* (Luke 13:34).

We have lost sight of the painful truth that the condition of our society is linked to the health of the Church. Again, this is not to detract from the God-honoring ministries that are currently going on. But we also need to make an honest evaluation of the illnesses of the Church, lest we never seek to get healthy. If Ravenhill is correct that we are a sick Church in a dying world, how exactly does the Church today display its sickness?

### **Heart Disease Is Evident**

We have a heart problem. We are much like those of whom the Lord said in Matthew 15:8: *These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.* We might respond that we do love the Lord, but consider how our actions reflect that. We give our time to go to services on Sundays—unless it conflicts with our child's soccer game, the Viking's kick-off time, or a frequent trip to the cabin. We'll drive several miles to hear a big-name speaker or enjoy a concert, but we can't seem to find the energy to go to a prayer meeting at church.

Our hearts are torn in so many different directions by all the distractions and "loves" of our lives. The Lord becomes one of the "many options." Our hearts are not desperate for Him and Him

alone. Even if we dare to dispute that statement, our lifestyles, calendars, and choices will give us away.

### **Cancer Ravages Us**

The Prophet Isaiah spoke some harsh words when he said to Israel, “Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart is afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil.”

Certainly there are cancers in the Body of Christ that are ravaging us. Statistics reveal that the divorce rate in the church equals that in the world. Sexual sins and addiction to pornography abound among church members and clergy. We have bowed down to the cult of personality by elevating people, titles, and programs instead of falling on our faces before the Living God. Anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, and long-held grudges ravage many of those who sit in our Sunday morning services. Paul warned us about sinning in our anger and allowing Satan to get a foothold (Ephesians 4:46-47). He was fully aware of the cancer that can grow in the Church.

### **Mental Illness Afflicts Us**

The harsh reality is that we are self-absorbed people. Think about the percentage of your daily thoughts that are centered on your own desires and need for attention from other people—including the ongoing need to be valued and esteemed. There is a delusional aspect to our thought lives. Even though we live in a world that is charged with racial, ethnic, and political hatred (along with increasing spiritual warfare) we are content to believe that we are doing just fine, thank you!

According to James 4:8, we are “double-minded” (commonly known as schizophrenic in today’s terms). We live with part of our thinking in alignment with the Spirit, and the other part lined up with the world. We try to live in both worlds when the Bible says we are to live as strangers and aliens here in this world (1 Peter 2:11).

### **We All Need the Great Physician**

Before you think that we are just ranting and pointing fingers, be assured that the Lord is dealing with each of us on the PTM staff. We feel the finger of God on our lives, and He is pointing out places that are painful to discover. God desires that each of us ask Him to show us the true condition of our hearts as He sees them. We need a diagnosis from the Great Physician. When we face our illnesses head-on under His loving care, we can find healing and wholeness in Him.

If the condition of our land and our society is a reflection of the health of the Church, then indeed the biggest tragedy is that we are a sick church in a dying world. Or, as Ravenhill says, ***“The reason we don’t have revival is that we are content to live without it.”***

Examine the events of this week at Virginia Tech and other tragedies in your community, and then ask yourself if you are content to live without revival. If the answer is no, then ask the Lord to make you desperate for His reviving presence.