AUTOPSY OF A DECEASED CHURCH

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PART 1: THE AUTOPSY

CHAPTER 3: THE PAST IS THE HERO
IT COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED

* All 14 deceased churches could have reversed the decline.
* Remaining members refused to see reality.
* They were blind to the slow erosion taking place.

THE AUTOPSY – COMMON THREAD

* The most pervasive and common thread of our autopsies was that the deceased churches lived for a long time with the past as hero.
* They clung to things of the past with desperation and fear.
* When any internal or external force tried to change the past, they responded with anger and resolution: We will die before we change!

FIGHTING FOR

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<th>Not For</th>
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<tr>
<td>Biblical Truth</td>
<td>The Past</td>
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<td>Christian Morality</td>
<td>The Good Old Days</td>
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<td>Doctrine</td>
<td>The way it used to be</td>
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<td>The way we prefer it to be</td>
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In Chapter Three find and discuss the four effects of prophets and dissenters.

1. Warn others that if the church did not change it would die.
2. Stalwarts don’t listen.
3. Dissenters leave.
4. Church grows closer and closer to death.

Scan Genesis 19:14-17, and Genesis 19:23-27.

How does this account mirror what we learned about these 14 churches in relation to Prophets and Dissenters?
They obeyed God even though they did not know the consequences of that obedience.

They saw themselves as foreigners of this land and life – temporary residents of the earth.

They sacrificed their comfort, their homes, their ways of life, and possessions because they knew that this life was only temporary, and a better and eternal life awaited them.

The good old days did not exist in their minds.

The future held the best days.

HEROES’ MINDSET

* Revere and Remember the past.

* Respect the Past

* We cannot Live In the Past

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PAST

HARRY R. TRUMAN
WHAT DO DYING CHURCHES CLING TO?

- Worship styles & orders of worship
- Times of worship services
- Buildings and rooms
- No acceptance of new pastoral leadership
- They looked inwardly rather than outwardly.
- Their own needs instead of others. Personal good old days.
- How we have always done it.

THREE MOST COMMON SENTENCES OF DYING CHURCHES

1. We’ve never done it that way before.
2. Our Pastor does not visit enough.
3. People know where our church is if they want to come here.

QUESTION 1.

- Are there any areas in your church where you are resisting change simply because of your own preferences?
QUESTION 2.

What is the common theme among the heroes of Hebrews 11?

QUESTION 3.

Look at Hebrews 11:13-16 and discuss it in light of churches that die holding onto the past.

PRAYERFUL COMMITMENT #3

God, give me the conviction and the courage to be like the heroes of Hebrews 11.

Teach me not to hold onto those things in my church that are my personal preferences and styles.

Show me not only how to let go, but where to let go, so that I may heed Your commands more closely.