

THE LAST WILL BE FIRST



Obituary & Tribute

ROY ONEAL DIESTELKAMP, was born August 27, 1948 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the youngest of five children of Leslie and Alice Diestelkamp. He died, November 17, 2018 having attained man's days of "threescore years and ten" (Psa. 90:10).

He is survived by his wife, Mary (Sullivan) Diestelkamp and three children: Jeremy, of Toronto, Ontario; Naomi, also of Toronto; and Zachery, of Thorold, Ontario. Also surviving him are his four older siblings: Wanda Hodges, Karl (Delores) Diestelkamp, Lavon (Robert) Speer, and Al (Connie) Diestelkamp.

Roy and Mary married on October 17, 1980, and raised three faithful children to adulthood while working with the church in St. Catharines, Ontario, for the past 35 years. Prior to that Roy worked with churches in Jordan, Ontario, and Chester, Virginia. In between works in Virginia and Ontario, he worked along with his father in gospel work in Australia. Through the years, he made several trips to India in order to help train native preachers. His full-time work as a preacher spanned 47 years, preceded by summer preaching opportunities between college sessions, working with churches in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Roy was "immersed" in evangelism even before he was immersed into Christ. Months before his eleventh birthday he accompanied his parents on their first two-year preaching work in the west African nation of Nigeria. At the time he was not too happy to leave his beloved America, but the experience prepared him for future work. Our family is honored by his willingness to work in our neighboring nation of Canada, which he grew to love as much as the United States. His death has created a void which needs to be filled for the sake of the gospel in Ontario. Fortunately, his son, Jeremy, is already working effectively in the gospel in Toronto.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Rev. 14:13).



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Heaven Will Be Even Better

By ROY DIESTELKAMP (1948-2018)

In song books used by many congregations is the old hymn: *FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH*. The first verse says:

*"For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our grateful hymn of praise."*

The song reminds us of the love of God, who not only made us, but then placed us on this very comfortable and beautiful earth.

The earth is just what man needs to live, and to thrive. It is in the perfect position in our universe and solar system for man to be able to live. If the earth was closer to the sun, it would be too hot for human life. If the sun were further from the earth, it would be too cold to sustain us. But God made us, and loved us, and put us in this good place.

The earth too is beautiful. We marvel at the beauty of the sunrise and sunset. We are enthralled by the purple mountain majesties, sometimes topped by snow caps; or the crashing sound of white-capped ocean waves rolling onto a sandy shore, or the lush foliage and flowers of tropical jungles. We stand in awe of the glory of stars, planets, and the moon, that we see at night in the sky, and the "northern lights" that can dazzle us with their color, and the rainbow that appears in a cloud on a sunny day.

Yes, the hymn writer was right, "for the beauty of the earth! God made this world good for us, and beautiful too. He could have made the earth utilitarian, but drab, mundane, or even ugly. We could have lived on that kind of earth. But God made the earth good, useful, and beautiful too, for

the benefit of man. We did not advise God as to how the earth should be, He made it for us, as it is.

I say this to remind us that God made heaven too, and it will be even better than this earth. The earth is carnal and temporary; heaven is spiritual and eternal (Jn. 14:1-3; 1 Tim. 2:10). The same God who made the earth beautiful has made heaven more beautiful and glorious! When John was inspired to describe heaven for our human understanding he used the most beautiful earthly words he could, to give us a glimmer of its magnificence. He described heaven as being of pure gold, and precious dazzling stones (Rev. 21:18-21). It

had a river of water as clear as crystal, and on the side of the river wonderful fruit on the tree of life (Rev. 22:1-2). The throne of God in heaven, was described like precious stones, surrounded by a rainbow, and a mirror-like floor as of crystal (Rev. 4:2-6). Heaven is not made of these earth-like materials,

but it was the best John could do to make us understand how valuable and beautiful it is.

We cannot imagine with our minds the magnificence of heaven. However, we know it is the home of the God who made this earth (Ac. 7:49), and we know it will be even more beautiful, and better than this earth.

Surely we do not want to fail to receive this heavenly home. There is nothing on earth, worth missing heaven for. If we love this earth, we will love it more. But remember, heaven is only for the prepared. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth...but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27).

Let us make sure we are ready for heaven (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

Abraham's Bossom
c/o Jesus Christ

Roy's Last Article

*This article was
written in 2017,
shortly before Roy
became ill*

Compel Them

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled’ (Lk. 14:23).

We know that God, the Master, has prepared a great supper. We know the excuses of those on the A-invitation list (Lk. 14:18-20). They’re not coming. Now what? “Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind” (Lk. 14:21). We don’t even think about the B-invitation list, but they’re out there and they’re to be invited. We need to expand our view to invite those we’ve never thought about or even seen before—the C-invitation list. “Go out into the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” There are people out there who need compelling. So, are we compelling? I’m going to warn you that you aren’t going to be comfortable with the definition of this word.

Compel: “denotes to put constraint upon, to constrain, whether by threat, entreaty, force or persuasion” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). It’s what Saul of Tarsus did to try to make saints blaspheme (Ac. 26:11). This is an uncomfortable word, and it’s supposed to be. The comfort of the “great supper” servants isn’t the point of Jesus’ parable. The will of the Master and the blessing of tasting the supper is everything. It must be accomplished even when compelling is required.

No, “...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God...” (2 Cor. 10:4). Our weapons are not carnal, but they should be compelling. We do not use terrorism—threats, manipulation, violence, or confusion. We should try to be thoughtful, kind and tactful. But our eternally vital mission should motivate us to prepare to step outside of the comfort zone of ourselves and others to be compelling.

Compelling Message

We must work to improve our ability to be compelling with Scripture. Depending on the situation, we must make compelling arguments from love, grace, history, evidence, etc.—all centered on the revealed mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16). It is the greatest story ever! How can it not flow from our hearts to touch everyone and everything around us through our words and actions? If we who have “tasted that the Lord is good” are not more compelling than a TV advertisement or viral video,

why would anyone think that what we have is anything special or worthwhile?

Compelling Method

We must go “into the highways and the hedges and compel them...” Sharing a few verses on social media won’t do it. What if you had to bring someone to the Lord? I think most of us would understand the motivation of being compelled if we were compelled to compel! We would plead, call in favors, and invite even when we expected rejections. We would intentionally create situations where unbelievers would be around believers. Invitations would be visible to everyone. We would get creative and pushy and annoying. We would talk to

strangers, create connections, and risk relationships. Some wouldn’t be comfortable with us and wouldn’t want to be around us anymore. Many would laugh and mock and talk about us behind our backs. And some unlikely, unfound people would fill the house of the Master for eternity.

Our Master says, “Compel them to come in.” As servants, we don’t get to say that we aren’t comfortable with compelling or that it won’t work. We just do it. The awkwardness we suffer is “not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

Compel someone today!

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‘A TIME TO DIE’ Even for Congregations

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Whatever happened to the great evangelistic church in Antioch of Syria? Why is it no longer to be found? What about the church in Philippi for whom the apostle Paul was so thankful? And where are the faithful churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna about whom the Lord had nothing negative to say. All of the churches of the New Testament have long ceased to exist.

You might correctly assume that most of them were casualties of Roman persecution, but that doesn’t account for the church in Philadelphia for whom the Lord placed “an open door that no one can shut” (Rev. 3:8) and promised to keep them from the hour of trial that was to come on the whole world (3:10).

No doubt, the day each of these good churches ceased meeting had to be sad days, but if they had remained faithful they had no reason to be ashamed. The same is true for churches today who must face the reality of their demise. Today, with people’s ability to easily relocate, many congregations that were once vibrant have dwindled down to where they lack the needed leadership necessary for edification and evangelism. This especially has been true in the more frigid regions of our nation. Christians who have worked effectively in these areas often seek jobs in other parts of the country where the church is strong in numbers, which leaves a void that is not easily filled, causing a slow but steady decline in the churches left behind. If there

is another faithful congregation within a reasonable distance it may be, for such congregations, “a time to die” (Eccl. 3:2).

Modern transportation options available to us today lessen the need for multiple congregations in most communities, and the merging of efforts makes sense for several reasons:

- 1) Christians who have been struggling to keep the doors open would be edified, and the congregation they join would be encouraged;
- 2) There would be a greater possibility of being able to appoint qualified men to serve as elders;
- 3) It would provide a larger pool of people willing to serve as Bible class teachers, song leaders, etc.;
- 4) Less of the funds contributed to the Lord’s work would need to be spent on meeting places and the costs of utilities and maintenance, possibly lessening the need for a preacher to seek outside support.

When a congregation is forced to consider closing its doors, the remnant often has feelings of needless guilt, which often delays the inevitable. Sometimes they delay for years what they know has to happen. No doubt, it is sad, but like the churches of the first century that eventually were forced to close, congregations of the twenty-first century that recognize the reality of their demise have nothing of which to be ashamed. Let the remnant praise God for the good that was accomplished and join with other faithful brethren for continued good work.

Following Faithful God Out of Egypt

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

One of the things we learn as we work our way through Scripture is that God not only makes promises, He *keeps* promises. He is faithful. Among the promises of God made to Abraham were that his descendants would become “a great nation” and be given “a land that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1,2). When he arrived in the land of Canaan God said to him, “To your descendants I will give this land” (v.7). Abraham sojourned from north to south, but we are told that “there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there” (v. 10). God did *not* instruct Abraham to do this. It is interesting to note that many years later, God explicitly told Isaac, “Do not go down to Egypt” (Gen. 26:2).

This was done in the context of repeating to Isaac the same promises made to his father (vv.3,4). Those promises were also repeated to Isaac’s son Jacob (28:13,14) as he simultaneously fled from his brother Esau (27:43) and went back to his ancestral home to find a wife (28:2). On his way there, in a place Jacob would name Bethel (house of God - v.19), God promised to Jacob, “I...will bring you back to this land” (v.15) to which Jacob replied that if God kept His promise, “then the LORD shall be my God” (vv.20,21). Of course, God kept His promise, and twenty years later (31:38) Jacob, a changed man, returned with his eleven (soon to be twelve) sons. Per God’s instruction, Jacob went back to Bethel; and there God reiterated the nation and land promises and renamed him Israel (prince with God) (35:1-15).

However, not all of the sons of Israel were what *they* ought to be, but God had a plan to form them and their descendants into a mighty nation. Many years previous God had told Abraham, “your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them” (15:13). How God accomplished this is the story of Joseph, the eleventh son of Israel. For envy, his brothers sold him into slavery; but God raised him up to power in Egypt, and he became the means of their salvation when a famine again ravaged the land. In this case God told Israel, “do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there” (46:3). Israel went, but years later he said to Joseph, “God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers” (48:21). Joseph believed God’s promise and “when he was dying... gave instructions concerning his bones” (Heb. 11:22). They *would* return to the land! How God kept His promises and redeemed the

children of Israel from slavery in Egypt illustrates God’s faithfulness, and it serves as a type of His greater plan to bless *all* nations through “Jesus Christ...the Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1).

The role Egypt plays in the biblical narrative and the plan of God is an interesting one to consider. The Hebrew word translated *Egypt* is *misrayim*. The name *Mizraim* first appears as a son of Ham (Gen. 10:6). The connections from Ham to Hagar (16:1) and beyond are generally not favorable ones. Egypt was a prosperous and beautiful place, but that did not necessarily equate it with being a good place (cf. 13:10). We may think positively about Egypt because of Joseph’s rise to power there (41:38-46) or the refuge it proved to be for his family in time of famine (45:7-11). Yet, do not forget what eventually happened to the children of Israel there.

When Jacob died, his body was embalmed, and his sons carried his body back to Canaan for burial, per his request (Gen. 50:1,12,13). Seeing the mourning of the many who made the journey, the local Canaanites called the place *Abel-Mizraim* (meadow of Egypt) (v.11). By this time, the children of Israel had lived in prosperity in Egypt for seventeen years (cf. 47:27,28). They would do so for at least another half century (cf. 50:22) before “there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph” (Ex. 1:8). From henceforth, for the people of God, the word *Egypt* would generally be associated with: 1) oppressive

bondage and 2) an enticement to trust in carnal things rather than in God. The connection between these two is telling. To put our trust in anything other (or more) than God ultimately brings us into bondage. Sin is tempting, but it *will* enslave us.

It was not sinful for the Patriarchs to go to Egypt. In this case, God told Jacob to go (cf. Gen. 46:3). Yet it is evident that, by the time Jacob died, the children of Israel had already become comfortable there. It is not wrong to be comfortable, but beware because it is a short walk from comfort to enslavement. The children of Israel would demonstrate this many times throughout their history.

Egypt represents this present world with all its enticements and comforts. It’s not wrong to be here, but beware of getting too comfortable and forgetting that we are just sojourners looking forward to the Promised Land. The enslaved children of Israel cried to get *out* of Egyptian bondage (Ex. 2:23). Eventually that deliverance came. Yet—throughout their history—they would abandon their Father Who rescued them, forgetting as Hosea said, “out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos. 11:1). Are we any better at remembering what God has done for us? Jesus left the glories of heaven to come to this world to deliver us from bondage to our sins. “Out of Egypt I called My Son” (Matt. 2:15). Let us follow Him out.

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‘The Good Fight’

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The King James Version of the Bible translates the apostle Paul’s “departure” statement in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 as “I have fought a good fight...” Most later translations read “*the* good fight” instead of “*a* good fight.” Having been raised on the KJV, I assumed Paul was expressing satisfaction with the quality of his fight for the Lord. In fact, I was impressed by the apostle’s confidence in his personal warfare. Don’t laugh, but even years later, after laying aside the KJV as my personal translation, whenever I quoted that verse I would automatically say “*a* good fight.” Eventually I realized that Paul was not boasting about his own fighting ability but stating that the battle in which he had participated was truly “the good fight” and he was honored to be part of it.

I am still impressed by the apostle’s confidence. I’m even impressed with the quality of his personal fight. However, it was not that he felt he had *earned* the crown but that the righteous Judge would *give* it to him. As accomplished as he was in his personal fight, Paul knew that his “crown” was a gift—that it was by grace he had been saved (Eph. 2:8). His finish in “the good fight” made him eligible for the victory crown.

Actually, you and I can have the same confidence and look forward to “the crown of righteousness” laid up for those who have fought “the good fight,” “finished the race,” and “kept the faith.” Even if we don’t match up as a soldier to the apostle Paul, we can stand before the righteous Judge as one who has loved His appearing. But we must be soldiers in the Lord’s army—and fight, we must!

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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A CONTRAST BETWEEN TWO MEN

By **SUNDAY AYANDARE**

The Book of Proverbs presents to us a contrast between two women. On one hand is an immoral, seductress type who "flatters with her words...of a crafty heart," who is "loud and rebellious..." (Prov. 7:5, 10-11). On the other hand is the virtuous type whose worth "is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10-29).

Not too long ago, two men in a local congregation presented similar contrast. One brother was absent for the Lord's Day worship and wrote a letter to the elders explaining why he was not present. He was going, according to him, "to sit and mourn along with other family members, the death of a relation who died in the United States of America." And truly, this writer heard over the local radio station under the personal paid announcements (PPA) slot an announcement put up by a family which had lost an illustrious son in the USA in an auto crash. *But that was Friday afternoon!*

The announcement suggests that the death did not occur on that Friday. Moreover, it was evidently clear that the relationship between the deceased and this young man who claims to be a Christian

was nothing more than what we usually describe as a "distant relative." Now, our good brother had that Friday to go and "sit and mourn with the family," but he did not! He had the following day, Saturday, to go and weep with the other relatives. Yet, he did not! The auspicious time as far as he was concerned came on Sunday morning! Not even Sunday afternoon after the Lord's Day worship was over. No, it just must be Sunday morning and not at any other time!

Would you like to know the reaction of the elders? They decided that the letter be read publicly and not only be publicly rejected, but publicly rebuked! The elders reasoned that the letter was terribly scandalous and put a question mark on the brother's claim to being a faithful Christian. 1 Timothy 5:20 says, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

In the audience for the Lord's Day worship was another brother whose daughter had died just the previous night. Her remains were committed to mother earth just a few hours before that Sunday morning. Precisely, the burial took place at about 10:30 p.m. on that Saturday night. This 25-years-old young lady was already proving to be the brightest star in the horizon

of the family. Indeed, she was the only daughter of her father and mother. What a tragedy!

Besides, this brother had the unfortunate lot of watching his only daughter breathing her last breath. Yet, this man was there to worship the Lord of all lords on this particular Lord's Day. What a sharp contrast!

One writer has aptly observed: "Generally, attendance is a faith problem. The weak who looks for an excuse will find one. The strong, who faces the same problems and difficulties as other people, somehow manages always to attend."

There are people who have no faith (Mk. 4:40). There are those of little faith (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31). And there are those with great faith (Matt. 8:10). It is high time we join the apostles in pleading, "Lord, increase our faith" (Lk. 17:5)

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Psalm 34:1

*"I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall continually be in
my mouth"*