

Slogging Now, Reward Later

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In a recent blog post (at www.thegospelcoalition.org), Ray Ortlund honored his father by highlighting a 486 page book that recorded decades of his father's ministry activities (such as sermons preached and weddings officiated). Ortlund asked, "How many hours of preparation and prayer and study are represented by this simple but eloquent written record, I wonder?" He went on to say this:

I am not impressed by young pastors who seem too eager to publish books and speak at big events and get noticed. They are doing the work of the Lord, and that's good. But what impressed me is my dad's daily slogging, year after year, in the power of the Spirit, with no big-deal-ness as the payoff.



This is the pastoral ministry that brings Jesus into the world today.

The humility and dedication of this man is easy to appreciate. He slogged away daily and quietly, using the gifts and strength God gave him.

There's a massive difference between "practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them" (meaning praised by them; Mt 6:1), and letting "your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:16). Ray Ortlund's father, and all faithful servants before and after him, have chosen to live so as to bring glory to God, not self.

The Bread and Cheese of Hundreds

Another example of God-honoring faithfulness is seen in the lives of Pastor William Thomas of Pyle, Wales, and his wife, Catherine.¹ They became known for their immense generosity in their little village. William would go to the homes of poor people to tell them about Christ, and then give them a little money in appreciation for the opportunity to

share with them. Additionally, the Thomas' home was marked by hospitality. A pastor in that day wrote this about William Thomas:

The name of William Thomas... was as familiar to the old preachers and the travelers to the Associations as bread and cheese. Indeed, the old man... was the bread and cheese of hundreds. All called there and were welcomed, without much questioning as to where they had come from or where they were going. No, the welcome would be, 'Come in; make yourself at home. Help yourself and make sure you get warm.'

That same pastor said this about William's wife: "Mrs. Thomas too was of the same kind-heartedness. She was generous and spent her days devising generousities." She would often gather wool that sheep left on the hedges and feathers the geese would shed. When asked why she would do such a thing when she didn't have any personal need for sheep wool or geese feathers, she replied, "So that I can give all the more to those who are in need."

Someone wrote an elegy (a song or poem in honor of someone who has died) in honor of the Thomas':

Kitchen, parlour, barn, and study,
All to God's cause freely given;
Bed and table, food and candle,
Anything that might be bidden;
Gold and silver, if required,
Oats and pasture nearby;
Yet the flour never dwindled,
Nor the cruse of oil ran dry.

"Well Done"

There's no good reason to strive to be famous or to clamor for men's praise. What should be our aim in this life? Daily slogging, in the power of the Spirit, for the glory of God. In the parable of the talents (Mt 24:14-30), Jesus didn't say, "Well done, good and *famous* servant." He said, "Well done, good and *faithful* servant."

¹All information and quotes about William and Catherine Thomas is taken from *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales*, Vol. 2 [Carlisle, Pa: Banner of Truth, 2008], 161-162.