

The Best of Vance Havner, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, January 1980
(25 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Success is found knowing the “Keeper of Keys.”

“No man with God’s message need politic, nor pull wires, nor sit hunched over cafeteria tables making contracts nor wait for some talent scout to find him. He need not chase key men around, if he knows the Keeper of the keys.” (p. 12)

2. No Retirement for Caleb.

“Retirement age is supposed to mean that I should sit in a rocking chair, wait for my social security check, and reminisce about the good old days. I have no thought of retiring. I would say with Caleb, “. . . *give me this mountain . . .*!” (Joshua 14:12). I am not asking for molehills. Old soldiers need not fade away. I have asked like Hezekiah for an *extension of time*; like Jabez, for an *enlargement of coast*; like Elisha, for an *endurement of power*, Caleb did not suffer, like the ten frightened spies, from a grasshopper complex. Too many cowards are cringing before the giants of Anak. God gave us Calebs looking for mountains to conquer!” (p. 15)

3. What Will the New Earth Be Like!

Often I have thought that if this world, marred and spoiled by sin, can be so lovely, what will the new earth be like when God has freed it from dictators, disease, death, and the devil and filled it with His glory as the waters cover the sea. (p.41)

4. Point out the Captain of My Salvation.

“Two boats passed each other on the Mississippi one day, when an old black workman on one pointed to the other boat and said to a white passenger beside him, ‘Look there’s the captain! Years ago, we were going along like this when I fell overboard and the captain rescued me. And ever since then I just love to point him out!’

“Once I was in water too deep for my wit and will to navigate, but the Captain of my salvation leaped overboard and came from heaven to earth to rescue me. And since then I just love to point Him out.” (p. 43)

5. We Miss the Purpose of God.

“Woodrow Wilson spoke of ‘being defeated by one’s secondary successes.’ Verily, we are cheated when we choose our own way, whatever we may attain in it, if we miss the purpose of God.” (p. 53)

6. Are We Too Big for Where We are?

“A radio preacher tells of receiving a letter from a young lady who was sure that she could do great things for the Lord if she could move to Pittsburgh, but was sure she could do nothing in the small town where she was. It developed that she refused to work in the small tasks in her home church because she felt too big for it. We have plenty of ‘Pittsburgh Christians,’ eagles on hummingbird nests, always too big for where they are.” (p. 53-54)

7. Weak Enough to Use.

“Hudson Taylor said he one thought God was looking for men strong enough to use, but he learned that God was looking for men weak enough to use.” (p. 54)

8. Don't Know What You Have in God's Hands.

“The lad who supplied the loaves and fishes for the feeding of the multitude would have been nonplussed if you had told him that morning that he had enough food for several thousand people. He did not know what he had until Jesus took it and broke it and blessed it and passed it around. Nor do you know what you have until you give it to the Lord.” (p. 54-55)

9. Do we divide the Word too much?

“But sometimes I do wish that those dividers of the Word, who take it apart much better than they ever get it back together, would agree a little better. Just when I am stretched out and resting on some good verse, some expositor shows up like a policeman to order me off private property and tell me that this verse is reserved for the Jew and that for the Kingdom Age. I have heard of a man without a country and I had almost decided once that these Word-Dividers were going to leave me a preacher without a Bible, and I began to wonder, ‘Is this the Communion of saints or the confusion of tongues?’ Finely, I took refuge in the text: ‘Let God be true, but every man a liar.’” (p. 62)

10. Know Things for Certain.

“Josh Billings is reported to have said, ‘I'd rather know a few things for certain than be sure of a lot of things that ain't so.’” (p. 63)

11. Few Things for Certain.

“These are a ‘few things for certain’ which I believe with all my heart. There is much

that I don't understand; if I could understand it, there wouldn't be much in it! I don't understand predestination but I believe and I am chosen by Him. I don't understand all about the security of the saints but I believe that I am a child of God and that, while my Father may discipline me, He will never disown me. I am not an expert in prophecy but I am not looking for the kingdom without the King. I know that some make a glorified hobby of prophecy, being occupied with His coming but not occupying till He come. I know that some are always studying the meaning of the fourth toe of the right foot of some beast in prophecy and have never used either foot to go and bring men to Christ. I do not know who the 666 is in Revelation but I know this world is sick, sick, sick, and the best way to speed the Lord's return is to win more souls for Him. I could lecture on 'The Rise and Fall of Hitler's Mustache' and get a crowd, but if I spoke on 'Obedience' you couldn't get some saints out to church with a rope and tackle. They don't believe in amusements but they want to be amused!" (p. 64-65)

12. No Man Makes Progress Dealing in Generalities.

"Joseph Parker, writing about Nathan the prophet, who told King David, 'Thou are the man,' says: 'Definite statements are manageable but vague charges are never to be entertained. He is always a false accuser who makes general charges: he is a learned false witness skilled and cunning who says he will not go into the case; he will say nothing about it; he thinks it is better to hold his tongue. Would God his tongue had been cut when he said that! He has said more by not saying than he could have if he had told the truth.... No man makes progress who deals in generalities.'" (p. 81)

13. We Fight for the Important Things.

"Well did Gresham Machen say that, 'the most important things are not those about which men are agreed but those for which men will fight.' But the fatigue and languor of this age have got us. Everybody is too dead tired to line up with Peter and the Gospel. It is much more comfortable to suspend judgment and go home to bed.

"To be sure, some men have made mistakes on the side of Peter and the Gospel. Peter made some himself. But he never made the supreme mistake of waiting to follow Jesus until he saw how it all turned out. He threw his blundering impetuous self into the Savior's cause from the very beginning, and although for a while almost everything he said and did was a mistake, his heart was not on the fence. He even denied his Lord, but he came back. The other disciples, too, forsook their Lord and fled. But they ended up, all but Judas, faithful through prison and scourging, and martyrdom or lonely exile. They paid the price. Down through the centuries a worthy succession has followed in their train. And along the road they have evermore met their opposers within and without. But the church has never suffered from antagonism half as much as from appeasement. The apostles have had their opposers, but a thousand times more dangerous have been the appeasers." (p. 82)

14. When Has It Been Easy to be a Christian?

“We hear a lot about how hard it is to be a Christian in these perilous times. We sigh for ‘the good old days’ and paint around them a brighter halo than they deserve. ‘*Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this*’ (Ecclesiastes 7:10). A subscriber complained to a magazine editor, ‘Your magazine is not as good as it used to be.’ The editor replied, ‘It never has been.’ When we look at former times, ‘distance lends enchantment to the view.’ When was it ever easy to be a Christian? The times have never been propitious.

Dr. Phillips says, ‘Many Christians talk about the difficulties of the times as though we should have to wait for better ones before the Christian religion can take root. It is heartening to remember that this faith took root and flourished amazingly in conditions that would have killed anything less vital in a matter of weeks.’” (p. 96)

15. More Mud than Medals.

“Prophets of God have usually been on the receiving end of more mud than medals.” (p. 97)

16. Adjust the Situation.

“The early Christian did not adjust to the situation; they adjusted the situation! Martin Luther did not say, ‘I don’t like the way things are going, but I’m not sticking my neck out.’ John Wesley did not say, ‘I deplore the deadness of the church, but what can I do about it? I’m not risking my bread and butter on nonconformity.’” (p. 98-99)

17. Day of Inexcusable and Unjustifiable.

“We live in a day of resignation, not to the inevitable, but to the inexcusable and unjustifiable.” (p. 99)

18. We Are Putting Up With the Status Quo.

“In the church we have adopted a similar policy of accommodation: ‘Let us accept things as they are and go along with the status quo. The end justifies the means.’ The church at Corinth accepted the immorality of one of its members and was resigned to it. The church in Pergamos tolerated Balaamism, and Thyatira “suffered that woman Jezebel.” Our Lord judges us in what we put up with as much as actively practice.” (p. 99)

19. Satisfied with Less.

One reason why we are satisfied with less these days is because most churches are.

How many pulpit committees do you know who put first in their requirements for a new minister: 'Does he know God? Is the Divine signature fresh upon him?' A lot of churches do not want a Jeremiah with the fire of God in his bones. He might make them too uncomfortable every Sunday! (p. 101-102)

20. Patmos Was a Promotion!

"In some situations, if a minister went all the way to his Lord without the *camp bearing* His reproach, it might be his last Sunday in the pulpit. A deeper experience of God is no guarantee of a call to a bigger church. A man had better not ask God to re-stamp his preaching orders these days with the idea that it will enhance his reputation and insure his succession. He had better be prepared to lose his reputation and forgo his success, for 'as the Master, so must the servant be.' Never forget that John was on Patmos for '*... the word of God and ... the testimony of Jesus Christ ...*' (REVELATION 1:2). But, after all, Patmos was a promotion, for it gave us the Revelation!" (p. 102)

21. Strategy on the Battle Ground.

"Dr. Mordecai Ham said, 'Paul was a strategist who thought out his strategy on the field of war, not in some Jerusalem war office where parchment and sealing wax were more plentiful than experience and foresight.'" (p. 107)

22. Prophets Are Solitary.

The prophets are solitary people; eagles do not fly in flocks. It is not easy to be a Lone Dissenter." (p. 107)

23. The Preacher is a Soloist.

"The preacher is a soloist; he was never meant to play the accompaniment to anything. The pulpit is not a platform from which to boost the projects of men, to bring in a false millennium, the Kingdom without the King." (p. 107)

24. Not Admit Byron to Fellowship.

"Joseph Parker said: 'There are those today who would clap their hands at the name of Byron who would not admit a living Byron to fellowship.'" (p. 108)

25. Loving Lost Souls.

"The world that God so loved that He gave His Son is the world of lost souls, and we ought to love lost souls. It was Dr. Candish who said: 'If we loved this world as God loved it we would not love it as we shouldn't love it.' When God's Word says, '*Love not*

the world . . . JOHN 2:15), it means this present age and set-up which is under the devil the god of this age, and the prince of this world.” (p. 111)