

A Vision for Missions by Tom Wells (The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA, 1985)
(24 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Proclaiming God for Who He is

God is worthy to be known and proclaimed for who He is, and that fact is an important part of the missionary motive and message. (Page 9)

2. To Tell about God

Those who know the most about God are the most responsible and best equipped to tell of Him. (Page 9; also Page 121)

3. The Sovereignty of God

What do we mean by the sovereignty of God? We mean that God rules in His creation. We mean that He reigns as King over all that He has made. We mean, to borrow the words of a man who himself was a king.

God doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand . . . (Nebuchadnezzar, speaking in Daniel 4:35).

We mean that history is “His Story.” This is the sovereignty of God. (Page 17)

4. A New Man, A New Awareness of God

Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth and described the beginning of the Christian life. He spoke of it as the coming of ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God’ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Paul meant this: when a man becomes a Christian he sees God in a new way. He sees God’s glory. There is a splendor, a magnificence, a majesty about God that he did not see before. The Christian is a new man, and he has a new awareness of God.’ (Page 22-23)

5. Glorifying God

Worship answers to greatness. In the words of the Puritan, Thomas Watson, ‘We glorify God, when we are God-admirers.’ (Page 23)

6. A Missionary is to Declare God's Glory

What then is the missionary to do? The Psalmist answers, 'Declare his glory among the nations' (Psalm 96:3). (Page 27)

7. Christians Serve God Only

The god-who-serves-ME requires flattery, not worship. A Christian, as we have seen, is a worshipper of God. If he is not that, he is not a Christian. No, the Christian does not follow 'the utilitarian god'. (Page 29)

8. God Needs Nothing From Us!

Ignorant worship, Paul told the men of Athens, is worship prompted by the idea that God needs something from us. That is its mistake. God, he said, is not 'worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything' (Acts 17:25). The world needs God. That is where the need lies, God does not need the world. (Page 33)

9. You Cannot Barter with God Nor is God Frustrated

God's self-sufficiency means that I cannot bargain with God. That was Paul's point with the Athenians. 'You must give up the idea,' he was saying, 'that you can barter so much worship for so much of God's good will.' I must cease to think of God in a commercial way. On His part, He needs nothing. On my part, I have nothing to give. Trade on this basis is unthinkable. I am God's debtor, but He can never be mine.

Let us see how God's self-sufficiency bears on missions. I want to come to this subject by quoting A. W. Tozer. Tozer strikes me, as he has many others, as a 20th-century prophet. Here are his words.

We commonly represent [God] as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated Father hurrying about seeking help to carry out His benevolent plan to bring peace and salvation to the world

Too many missionary appeals are based upon this fancied frustration of Almighty God. An effective speaker can easily excite pity in his hearers, not only for the heathen but for the God who has tried so hard and so long to save them and has failed for want of support. I fear that thousands of young persons enter Christian service from no higher motive than to help deliver God from the embarrassing situation. His love has gotten Him into and his limited abilities seem unable to get Him out of. Add this to a certain degree of commendable idealism and a fair amount of compassion of the underprivileged and you have the true drive behind much Christian activity today. (Page 34-35)

10. True Faith Feeds on God

Faith must feed on God as He is, if it is to be true faith. Faith, to be robust, must have worthy thoughts of God. (Page 39)

11. God is Worthy of Our Worship!

If we know the God of the Bible we know the God who is eminently worthy of being known. If we are humbled, He is exalted. And if God helps us we may yet learn to rejoice in His self-sufficiency. If God brings us out of our stupor we may hear such words as the following with jubilation:

[God is not] worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things . . . (Acts 17:25),

and this:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? (Job 38:4),

and this:

If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof (Psalm 50:12),

and this:

My word . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isaiah 55:11),

and this above all:

I will build my church! (Matthew 16:18).

Here is the God worthy to be known and to be proclaimed for who He is! (Page 40-41)

12. God's Purpose Will Prevail Against Sin

When the brothers sold Joseph they cared nothing for the purpose of God. Nevertheless, they brought it about. The sin was theirs, but the act was God's. In this, as in all else, God was King and they were His unwitting servants. The sovereignty of God held against the sinful aim of men. They, like Adam, defied God . . . and they, like Adam, carried out His purpose! (Page 46-47)

13. Foulest Crime, God's Will

Suppose we ask the question, 'What was the foulest crime this earth has ever known?' What answer can we give? Surely it was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ!

But wait; let us ask another question, 'What is the foremost source of blessing?' The answer is the same! There can be no other—the crucifixion of Jesus Christ! It was the wickedest deed that man could do. See it in all its blackness! Take not a jot of its viciousness away! Viler crime than ever Adam dreamed! All that, and infinitely more!

But when you have said your worst and when you have decried the corruption of those killer's hearts, remember this. The murder of Jesus was the purpose of God. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him' (Isaiah 53:10). God was Lord at the cross as well as at the empty tomb. Ever and always . . . God is King! (Page 47)

14. God Will Be God Regardless of Sinners or Sin

God is free to do as He pleases, and that is what happens. Sin cannot dethrone God. That is what sin aims to do, but it misses its mark. Sin brings guilt to a man, but it does not bring him one ounce of sovereignty. God rules even when men imagine they are defying Him. The Psalmist knew this truth. Listen to him.

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed . . .

And how does God react?

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: The Lord shall have them in derision (Psalm 2:2, 4).

Heaven makes merry over the conceit of the proud. God will be God, let them do what they may. God will be God, after they are forgotten. (Page 47-48)

15. The Sovereignty of God's Grace

The sovereignty of God's grace. I mean by that phrase simply this: God dispenses His favors, the favors that have to do with salvation, as He pleases. He does not give up His lordship to anyone at any time. God remains King, even in bestowing His grace. Here are His terms:

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion . . .

What conclusion must we come to, then? Paul draws it for us:

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9:15, 16).

Man's will and man's performance do not bring salvation. Salvation is absolutely of God. (Page 48)

16. God the Father to Believers

God is a Father to every believer, to those in the hardest place as well as to those in the easy. All the richest blessings that the term 'Father' ought to suggest are poured out on every follower of Jesus Christ. That will be true of him whether he is in Manhattan or Mali, Edinburgh or Ethiopia. Everywhere and always . . . God is King on behalf of His children. Such is the sovereignty of God's power. (Page 50-51)

17. God's Grace for Missionary Work

And what shall we say about the sovereignty of God's grace? In my judgment there could be no greater encouragement to missionary work. 'For when we were yet without strength,' Paul tells us, 'Christ dies for the ungodly' (Romans 5:6). Shall we look for success to men without strength—without strength of moral character, without strength of will? If we do, we shall look in vain, for we lean on a broken reed.

But what if we look to God for our success? And what if God has 'a great multitude, which no man could number' in His eye and on His heart? Why then, we ought to take courage. Who knows what God may do? The missionary is not alone. He is accompanied by the God who has determined to have a people for Himself. And God has made up His mind to take them from 'all nations, and kindreds, and tongues' (Revelation 7:9). Here is the missionary's hope. It is not in himself. It is in God. (Page 51)

18. God Sees Good and Evil at all Times

The blackest counsel of hell shines as noonday before the understanding of God. He knows it all. 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good' (Proverbs 15:3). (Page 54)

19. Christians Have faith in the Wisdom of God

The Christian rejoices in the wisdom of God. Heartache come to him as it does to all men. Puzzles about the world situation perplex him too. He has no inside information on the day-to-day acts of God. But the Christian has something better: he had faith in the wisdom of God. The Christian knows that God knows what He is doing. (Page 56)

20. Best to Tell About God

Those who know the most about God are the most responsible and best equipped to tell of him. (Page 146; 9 and 121)

21. Burn Out for God

I have hitherto lived to little purpose, more like a clod than a servant of God; now let me burn out for God. (Page 147)

22. Loving Earthly Life not as Main Ingredient Missionary Service

It is true that Martyn did not spare himself, and he paid the price in an early death. But loving one's earthly life is not a main ingredient in missionary service. (Page 148)

23. The Cause of Mercy and Truth

If we labor to the end of our days without seeing one convert, it shall not be the worse for us in time, and our reward is the same in eternity. The cause in which we are engaged is the cause of mercy and truth, and therefore, in spite of seeming impossibilities, it must eventually prevail. (Page 151)

24. God is the Message Longing World

The God who is worthy to be known and served for who He is, is Himself the answer to this world's longings. And those who know Him best are best equipped to serve Him. He is their message. If we have discovered the glory of God in the face of Christ, we must not hold back. The God of glory must be made known. Have we learned to live on God? If we have, to any degree, we are equipped to that extent. We are equipped to serve the glorious God! (Page 152)