

N A V C L A S S I C

The Need of the Hour

DAWSON TROTMAN

NAVPRESS 



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Editor's Note: *Dawson Trotman delivered the message "The Need of the Hour" shortly before his death in 1956. The message was transcribed and published in 1957.*

In reintroducing this booklet to a new generation, our intent is to preserve the original language of this classic message. Scripture references in the King James Version, the use of male pronouns, and references to communism reflect the original setting in which this booklet was written.



DAWSON TROTMAN, converted at age twenty, gave thirty years to vigorous pursuit of the goal “to know Christ and make Him known.” Trotman was a man who believed God, who asked Him for great things and saw God answer. The ministry of The Navigators, which Trotman founded in 1933, is one of those answers. He led the ministry until his death in 1956.

Foreword

When Dawson Trotman, founder and president of The Navigators, died in 1956, he left men and women at work in fourteen countries of the world, helping individuals of varied races and languages *come to know Christ and to make Him known*. That work has continued to grow and is now in 103 countries, with 152 peoples and 150 languages.

Since the day the responsibility for the Navigator ministry was suddenly committed to me, I have been thankful for the principles learned from this man of God.

Dawson lived and moved in terms of the Great

Commission and of men—men God could use to get the job done. Some saw him as a natural leader, some as a Christian disciplinarian, others as a man of dynamic vision or great heart. Working beside him for fifteen years, I knew him primarily as a man who took God at His Word and staked all he had on His promises.

In one of his last messages to staff and trainees at Glen Eyrie, our headquarters and training center in Colorado Springs, Dawson drove home what he saw to be *the need of the hour*. As you read it, expect God to challenge you to a greater faith.

LORNE SANNY
April 1999

I think Dawson Trotman touched more lives than any man I have ever known. Thousands of people of many races and languages and cultures have been influenced by this great man.

Many times we bared our souls to each other as only men do who have the fullest confidence in each other. I sought his counsel often.

Dawson was a man of vision. When our God is small, the world looks big; but when our God is big, the world looks small. And Dawson saw the world as conquerable for Christ. No project was too big and no undertaking too great to tackle if he felt that God was in it; his God was big and the world was little.

He was always dreaming, planning, and working out new methods and means of reaching people for Christ. He seemed to have a sanctified imagination that could look beyond handicaps and circumstances and barriers. He planned big things for Christ.

BILLY GRAHAM

What is the need of the hour? That depends upon the person who is thinking about it. If I'm walking along the street and see a beggar with a tin cup, what's the need of the hour? A dime. If a woman is being taken to the hospital, what's the need of the hour? A doctor.

But in Christian work, what is the need of the hour? I started to list the things that we often feel are *the* need — those things which if supplied would end our troubles.

Some say, "Well, if I just had a larger staff." Would more staff be the answer? Today many a minister would like to have an assistant, and many a mission would like to have more missionaries.

The cry of returned missionaries is always for more men and women to fill up the ranks — to them, the need of the hour.

Others say, “We don’t need more workers, but if we had better facilities . . . if we just had more office space and more buildings and bigger grounds and a base of operation. If we had a place like Glen Eyrie, then we could do the job.”

In certain areas of the world, they say it’s communications we lack or better transportation or better means to take care of health. The need of the hour on many a mission field is merely a radio. But if you get that radio, then there’s another need followed by something else and something else. Many feel it is literature. I hear that in my travels all over the world, “We just lack literature.”

I know of people today who are saying, “If we could just get into a certain place.” For years people have been on the borders of Nepal saying, “If we could just get in.” To them the need of the hour is an open door into Nepal. Right now hundreds of people are saying, “If we could just get into China.” The Bible says, “My God shall supply all your need” (Philippians 4:19). If the need were an open door

into China, why doesn't God open it? "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth . . . I have set before thee an open door" (Revelation 3:7-8).

Paul found closed doors, but closed doors to him weren't the problem. I believe those closed doors were used of God to show him the open doors he was to go through next. If God wanted to put His hand over the great country of China tonight, He could open the door in forty-eight hours.

Some say, "We need time. If we just had more time." Others say, "If I just weren't so old, if I were young again." People have said to me, "Daws, if I had known when I was twenty years old what I know now, I could have done a hundred times more for the Lord. Why didn't I?"

Often the biggest need of the hour seems to be money. "If we just had money — that's the answer to a larger staff, more facilities, literature, communications, and transportation. If we just had money."

What is the need of the hour? Frankly, I don't believe it is any of these. I am convinced that the God of the universe is in control, and He will

supply all of these needs in His own way and in His own time, all else being right.

Let me tell you what I believe the need of the hour is. Maybe I should call it the *answer* to the need of the hour. I believe it is an army of soldiers, dedicated to Jesus Christ, who believes not only that He is God but that He can fulfill every promise He has ever made and that there isn't anything too hard for Him. It is the only way we can accomplish the thing that is on His heart — getting the gospel to every creature.

In 1948 I was in Germany for six days. I had been put in touch with Colonel Paul Maddox, chief of chaplains for all of Europe, and through his recommendation to the commanding general, I got into Germany. I invited fifty German fellows to meet with me for three days, and twenty-five of them came. I talked to them every evening for three hours, beginning to lay before them the Great Commission and the idea that I felt Germany not only needed to hear the gospel, but that Germans themselves needed to obey the Great Commission by sending missionaries.

I gave them the opportunity to ask questions

during the meetings, and every once in a while a hand would go up. I was trying to lay upon their hearts the very thing the Lord laid on the hearts of the disciples when He told them to go to every creature, make disciples of every nation, start in Jerusalem and go to the ends of the earth. One German spoke up, “But, Mr. Trotman, you don’t understand. Here in Germany — some of us right in this room — don’t even have an Old Testament; we only have a New Testament.” But I pointed out, “When Jesus Christ gave these commandments, they didn’t have even a New Testament.”

Later one of them said, “But, Mr. Trotman, we have very few good evangelical books in this country. In America you have thus and so.” I asked, “How many books did the disciples have?”

A little further on one of them asked, “Is it true that in America you can hear the gospel any day?” I answered, “Yes.” He said, “If we had that . . . but we can’t get the message out on any radio.” I said, “But the disciples had never heard of a radio.”

They said, “You have automobiles; we ride bicycles.” I reminded them, “The disciples didn’t have bicycles. Jesus rode a borrowed burro.”

Now these questions didn't come up one right after the other or they would have caught on, but they were brought up during the nine hours together. Finally, one fellow spoke up and said, "In America you have money. I work twelve hours a day for sixty cents. We don't have much money." I replied, "The disciples were sent out without purse and without script."

Every excuse in the books was brought up. "We don't have this, and we don't have that. We don't have buildings; we don't have facilities." Each time I replied, "But the twelve didn't, and He sent them out."

Then finally near the end, one fellow, a little older than the rest and with almost a bitter expression on his face, got up and said, "Mr. Trotman, you in America have never had an occupation force in your land. You don't know what it is to have soldiers of another country roaming your streets. Our souls are not our own." I responded, "The disciples lived at the time Jesus Christ lived, and their souls weren't their own. The Roman soldiers were in charge."

Then it dawned on me in a way I had never

considered before. When Jesus Christ sent the eleven out, He let a situation exist which was so bad that there could never be a worse one. No printing presses, no automobiles, no radios, no television, no telephones, no buildings, not one single church, no uniforms, nothing for the vestry. He didn't even leave them a little emblem.

He left them only a job to do, but with it He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore . . ." (Matthew 28:18-19).

What does the "therefore" mean? It means, "I have the power to give you the order, and I have the power to back you to the hilt." He has *all power in heaven and earth*—not just heaven but in the earth; *all power*, not part of the power, but *all power*, which means power over the Romans and power over the communists.

Earlier Jesus Christ had said to the same little group, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me . . ." He that what? ". . . *believeth* on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12).

Do you believe that statement is true? Or must you say that for a moment it makes you stop to

wonder? Could it possibly be true that the Son of God would say to a human being, “The things that I do, you shall do, and greater things than these you shall do”?

I believe with all my heart that the reason so many wonderful Christians don’t accomplish more in their lives is they don’t believe Jesus meant what He said. They have never come to the place where they believe that the all-powerful One who commissioned them could enable them to do these greater works. The last thing He said was, “All power is given unto Me. I’m giving you all your orders now. Go and teach all nations and see that every created being hears the Word.”

Now we think it is going to be a tough job even with the printing press, the radio, the airplane, and modern medicine. What do you think the early disciples thought about it? When Paul wrote to the Romans he said, “I thank my God . . . that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8). When he wrote to the Thessalonian church he said, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). And He

said to the Thessalonians, who were not even as strong as the Bereans, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad” (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

How did the message go? Not by telephone, not by television, but by tell-a-person. That’s the only method they had. It was as simple as that. Everyone was to tell someone else. “I cannot help but speak the things which I have seen and heard” was the impelling force. That’s how it spread, and it did spread. They didn’t need the printing press, and they didn’t need materials.

Over in England they really went for Bible study and memory materials. It was hard to get them to see their value at first, but when they did, some of them felt they were a necessity. One rainy night during the Billy Graham Crusade at Wembley Stadium, around three thousand came forward at the invitation. Two clergymen came running up to me, “Mr. Trotman, Mr. Trotman, we ran out of materials! What will we do?” I said, “Relax. They probably ran out of them at Pentecost, too!” They looked at me for a minute and, obviously getting

the point, said, “That’s right!”

The answer is the man, not materials. Maybe the greatest problem today is that we try to put into printed form that which should go from lip to ear and heart to heart. We de-emphasize materials, and people can’t understand why.

Materials are the tools. Tools by themselves are useless. If there were a young fellow beginning his study of medicine who had all the necessary instruments for a major operation, and an old doctor who just had a razor blade and a plain, ordinary crooked needle and some store string, I’d put myself into the hands of the old doctor for surgery rather than this boy over here with all his instruments, wouldn’t you? It’s not only the tools; it’s the man who has the tools in his hands.

What is the need of the hour? I’ll tell you the need of the hour. It is to believe that our God controls the universe, and when He said, “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14), He meant it. That is exactly what is going to happen. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord!

Today more people than ever in a lot of our civilized countries know about Jesus Christ because of radio, literature, mission societies, Billy Graham, etc. But they only know *about* Him; they don't know Him. The Book says, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." How much does the water cover the sea? Do you think that every square inch of sea has water in it? Yes! You have no illustration more complete than "as the waters cover the sea." That's how every tongue and tribe and nation in every single nook and corner of this earth is going to hear about Jesus Christ and His glory.

What is the need of the hour? It is to believe that "Thy God reigneth" (Isaiah 52:7). The rain isn't coming down like you feel it should in order to have good crops. Can He send it if it's necessary? If He doesn't, can you say, "Thank you, Lord"? That's what He wants. "In every thing give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

You don't need anything that He can't supply. Is it knowledge? Is it strength? God can do more through a weakling who is yielded and trusting than He can through a strong man who isn't. "For

all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

I want the fellows and girls who come to Glen Eyrie to go away with this thought securely in their minds: “God, I’ll never come to the place where I’m going to let the lack of anything persuade me that You are being hindered.” I would rather you would go away with that in your hearts than with methods or materials or ideas that we may have to share with you. Because I know the potential of the man who will come to the place where he can say hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, “Lord, I believe my God reigneth.”

Listen! You have an excuse if you want one. You have more than an excuse; you have hundreds of them. That isn’t what’s holding us back. It’s that we don’t live and preach the fact that He is on the throne. And when He’s running the show, He will take care of all the props, even the transportation.

I was in Hong Kong on my way to India in 1948 when a Pan American flight was delayed long enough to make me miss my connection in

Bangkok. I inquired if there were any way for me to get to Calcutta. The crew said, “No, not a chance in the world.” Then one said, “We do have orders for this plane to go on to Calcutta, but because of regulations this crew can’t take it.” So I prayed, “Lord, You know about the meetings in Calcutta, and it’s nothing for You to work this out.”

We got to Bangkok and a radio message came: “We do not have a crew to bring this ship to Calcutta. Your crew is ordered to bring it.” Only four people were on that big DC-6, and the other three didn’t have to go to India for three days. I arrived in time for those meetings, and as a result, a man from Nepal came to know the Lord, a man who later became a key for getting the gospel to that closed country way up in the Himalayas.

The need of the hour, as far as I’m concerned, is to believe that God is God and that He is a lot more interested in getting this job done than you and I are. Therefore, if He is more interested in getting the job done, has all power to do it, and has commissioned us to do it, our business is to obey Him—reaching the world for Him and trusting Him to help us do it.

The Lord could easily have said to the disciples, “You fellows are only eleven men, and you lack facilities and transportation, so all I want you to do is start the fire in Jerusalem.” But He didn’t say that. The believers in South India testify they are glad Thomas believed Jesus Christ that he was to go to the uttermost part of the earth. I understand that the Mar Thoma Church, the largest in southern India, traces its origin back 1,900 years to the work of this disciple. Aren’t you glad that Thomas didn’t say to Jesus Christ, “I don’t have a DC-6 yet”?

“Ye shall be witnesses unto me in . . .” (Acts 1:8) not *either* Jerusalem *or* Samaria *or* Judaea or on the foreign field. You are to be witnesses, when you have the Holy Ghost, “*both* in Jerusalem, *and* in all Judaea, *and* in Samaria, *and* unto the uttermost part of the earth” (emphasis added).

Suppose you are a pastor. You have a responsibility to your people to be a shepherd to the flock. You also have a responsibility for people in other countries. You have to be concerned. The only reason you are not there telling them about Jesus Christ is because you’re training the laypeople to love and

serve the Lord Jesus Christ in your city, your state, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

I close up with this, a little of the Nav story. I used to have a map of the world that I kept before me. I'd put my fingers on some of the islands—Australia, New Zealand, Okinawa, Formosa (present-day Taiwan)—and say, “Lord, let me win men for You in these places.” I wasn't challenged to do this by hearing a sermon, but by a verse of Scripture, Jeremiah 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

In the previous chapter Jeremiah had said to the Lord, “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee” (Jeremiah 32:17). Ten verses later the Lord says to Jeremiah, “I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” Then just a few verses later He says, “All right, if you believe me, call unto me and I will answer.”

I asked a buddy, “Do you believe this verse?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “I do, too, but I've never seen these great and mighty things, and I'd like to.” So

we started a prayer meeting every morning. We decided to meet at a certain spot, have a fire built, and be in prayer by five o'clock—not one minute after five. We just made it a date. We prayed two hours on weekdays but met at four on Sundays to pray for our Sunday school boys by name and for the Sunday school. We prayed for Harbor City, Torrance, Long Beach, San Pedro, Los Angeles, Pasadena, and the surrounding cities from which I had received calls from young Christian fellows saying, “Come over here and show us how you're reaching these boys.”

The third and fourth weeks we started to include cities up the coast—San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle, and Portland. We said, “Lord, use us in these cities.” By the fourth or fifth week we had covered every state in the Union. As we listed them we prayed, “Lord, use us to win young men to You in the state of Oregon. Use us to win young men in Massachusetts.” Every morning we prayed for every one of the forty-eight states. Then about the sixth week one of us said to the other something like this: “If we believe God is big enough to let us win men in every one of the

forty-eight states, let's go all out!"

We bought a world map and left it up in the Palos Verdes hills. Each morning we'd pull this old map out and pray that the Lord would use us in China and Japan and Korea. At the end of the forty-two days, I felt a burden lift. We stopped asking God to use us and began thanking Him that He was going to do so. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1), and substance is substance. It's reality; it's something you can believe in. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. We claimed the promises as we prayed. These promises were the brick, and prayer was the mortar that put them together.

After forty-two days, we discontinued our prayer meeting. Forty-eight hours later I was in the hospital, flat on my back for a week, and I had a lot of time to think. The Minute-Men idea came, and from that the Navigator work was born.

Three or four years later I was rummaging around in a drawer of the living-room table when I found a little purple card — "Washington, Oregon." In another drawer was a list of names — Les Spencer from Illinois, John Detric of Texas, Gurney

Harris from Arkansas, Ed Goodrick of Wisconsin. I discovered that men from every one of the forty-eight states had come to the Savior during those three or four years. God had answered, and these men were being trained as disciples. Then I thought of the world. “Why, Lord, am I permitted to have a part in this?” For the same reason you are.

“All power in heaven and earth is mine. It’s mine for you to appropriate.” This is not only a privilege; it’s an order. He wants nothing less. God doesn’t want you to take an island. He wants you to take the world. For what are you asking God? What do you want? Do you want to win a few? You’ll have to start with the few, and you’ll have to be successful with the few. You *can* be because Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). No man ever followed Jesus who didn’t become a fisher of men. He never fails to do what He promised. If you’re not fishing, you’re not following. You have to win one before you can win five, and five before you can win five hundred. The world is before you. How big is your faith?

The need of the hour is men who want what Jesus Christ wants and believe He wants to give them the

power to do what He has asked. Nothing in the world can stop those men. Do you believe that? Do you want to be one of them? You may, but you will have to ask. “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Years ago when I prayed for Formosa, I couldn’t have comprehended what I’m seeing now. But that’s the way He has promised it will be; so when you call, ask big!

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