

## THE TRUTH OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

### Study 20:

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#### FIFTH DAY: FOREIGN MISSIONS A PROOF OF THE VITALITY OF THE GOSPEL

1. There is no more encouraging proof of the vitality of the gospel than the strong enthusiasm with which missionary endeavor has been re-born during the past century. A faith that will make sacrifices is a living faith. Missions show that the gospel can still produce the heroic. The principles of the kingdom enunciated in Matt. 16:24, 25; 19:27-30 were not exhausted in the first century. Is this persistent heroism based on delusion? Are only the selfish ruled by reason?
2. The success of missions may be estimated by the reproduction of the Christian type of character even in the most unlikely quarters. A sense of sin is created within converts from heathenism which expresses itself naturally in the words of Scripture, a conscience regulated by the authority of Jesus as a living Person, and a character approximating in its virtues to the Christian ideal. Threadbare often enough the garment of the new man may appear it is true, but far oftener it is surprisingly rich, and in its simplicity puts to shame the fashions of older communities. Above all the old passionate love to Jesus the unseen Friend, their Redeemer and Lord, is repeated.
3. Multitudes of these converts to-day are winning their lives by seeming to throw them away in the service of the kingdom or the endurance of persecution (Luke 21:19). There is the daring devotion of the South Sea Islanders, who leave their homes and often are martyred by cannibals in their desire to prepare the way for the white missionary. There was the faithfulness of the Chinese converts during the late war, and there is the fact that among the blacks of South Africa "the natives who have been educated in various churches form an almost negligible element in the criminal class." We should not expect the rich harvest of autumn fruit, but the tender shoots of Christian character are manifest on nearly every mission field.
4. The gospel also dispossesses the half-truths of other religions by its fuller light. This effect is to be marked not only by direct conversions, but by the healthier moral atmosphere which it creates in heathen lands. For example in India, chiefly as a result of missionary effort, the pagan spirit has become more shy in professing its shameless mythology or worship. "Christianity's method is silent, slow, certain. It undermines rather than violently overthrows old systems. It deals with old false beliefs or old evils which oppress mankind rather by taking the spirit and life out of them, by substituting something higher, than by directly attacking them" (Stewart, "Dawn in Darkest Africa").