

## THE TRUTH OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

### Study 20:

---

#### FOURTH DAY: THE REAL THOUGH NECESSARILY SLOW PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL

1. A more modern objection to the power of the gospel is the sorry spectacle of the slums of our cities, and our civic, national and international vices. The Mohammedan will point with scorn at our drunkenness, the Oriental at the greed of Western peoples, and the thoughtful Buddhist at our materialism. Even the Anglo-Saxon critic, by no means always unsympathetic, is often staggered by the impotency of the gospel principles in our modern life.
2. Several considerations modify this objection. The Christian ideal has made progress, and Christendom, wherever the gospel as it stands in the New Testament has been faithfully proclaimed, is far ahead of the rest of the world in the moral ideal it sets before itself. The Western world, for example, has a moral conscience. There is a spirit, often indeed elusive but most real, which compels moral obligation, reciprocal duties between man and man, human pity, and has made certain things impossible.
3. Those possessed by the Spirit of the gospel are the most active in facing the deplorable conditions of modern life, and their work has proved to be not ineffective. On none does the weight of present ills rest more heavily than on those whose sense of their shame is keenest. This is a powerful motive for unflinching philanthropic effort.
4. The progress of the gospel is bound to vary with the soil of the hearts on which the good seed falls. Jesus warned His disciples not to be too enthusiastic about returns. The moral and spiritual renewal of the individual must in most cases be a slow displacement of old and deeply ingrained habits by better conduct.
5. Jesus also taught that the kingdom would be antagonized by a virulent spirit of evil. This is evident in the anarchistic elements which hate the gospel, for its success means their annihilation. Mammon also in an infinite variety of shapes among rich and poor works subtly upon the hearts of men. And our lapsed masses are part of the awful price we are paying for the mistakes of the Church in the past. Their spiritual faculties are atrophied, their religious natures paralyzed. But the only true weapon of the gospel is its work of love and its appeal to the spiritual within the heart. Where this has almost ceased to be responsive from whatever cause, it can be but slowly recovered, and the delicate spiritual sense requires time to subdue the coarse elements of Mammon and self. In some unfortunately there seems to be nothing but hatred of the good. Did not Jesus Himself lose hope of some? (Mark 3:29.)