

WARM-UP

- Tell about a time you had a package delivered that was not in good condition. What did you do about it?
- Was there a time you were asked to pass a message to someone, but you had a hard time remembering it? What happened?
- How successful are you in keeping stains off your clothes? Has there been a stain you couldn't wash off?

WORD *⁸And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith . . . ¹¹But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."*

ACTS 15:8,9,11

In Acts 15, the disciples fought for the truth of the gospel. The message of the gospel was being tainted by *men from Judea* who were telling Gentiles (non-Jews) that they must be circumcised to be saved. But Paul reminded them that God *made no distinction* between Jews and Gentiles, and that all are saved through faith. He explained how the gospel applied to the Gentiles: in the same way as the Jews, they too receive the Holy Spirit, the cleansing of their hearts by faith, and salvation through the grace of Jesus. For all, to be saved is only by grace and through faith. It is not traditions, religious practices, or our works that maintain the truth of the gospel. In fact, good works are naturally birthed as we experience the truth and freedom of the message of Christ. Here are three things every person can experience from the true message of Christ.

1 | The message of the gospel is offered to all people.

“And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us . . .” ACTS 15:8

The message of the gospel is not exclusive to one race or ethnicity. God demonstrated His acceptance of the Gentiles when He gave the Holy Spirit to them even as He gave it to the Jewish believers. As a result, the church was marked with openness to all people groups. How does the acceptance of God for all people affect how you see others? How have you experienced or observed this in church community?

2 | The message of the gospel cleanses our hearts.

“. . . and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.” ACTS 15:9

Receiving the gospel results in the cleansing of our inner being from sin. The true message of the gospel cleanses our hearts by faith, pointing us toward Christ and giving us a fresh start. When did you fully understand what Christ had done for you? How did you respond?

3 | The message of the gospel is salvation by grace.

"But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." **ACTS 15:11**

In Christ, all men are saved. Stripped of traditions and religious practices, the plain and simple gospel is for the salvation of all men. Because of this, we cannot look on others with prejudice or judgment. We also cannot depend on our own works for salvation. How did you experience the true gospel of Christ? How does the Bible say that we are saved? (Ephesians 2:8,9)

APPLICATION

- Have you already given your life to Christ and felt His conviction, cleansing, and salvation? If not, would you like to do so today?
- The message of the gospel was being attacked from both outside and inside the church. As followers of God, we must hold to the true gospel through the Word of God.
- Do you know friends or family who have not yet experienced a life-changing encounter with God? How can you preach the gospel to them?

