



I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 1:14-17

Proclaiming with power

“How would you know what it is like to experience [fill in the blank]...?”

“You have no idea what it is like to be [fill in the blank]...”

“You don’t understand.”

Chances are, when you consider how diverse our backgrounds and experiences are, they’re absolutely right.

Think of all the diversity the apostle Paul encountered on his missionary travels. His three missionary journeys took him throughout the diverse cities of the Mediterranean world. He saw new and different sights and heard different sounds. He interacted with all sorts of different people. He immersed himself in different cultures. And, I’d be willing to bet he likely ate a lot of different foods, too.

But the gig wasn’t merely to be a cultural aficionado. Paul’s gig—the Christian gig—is following Christ wherever he leads us—that we would be his witnesses and proclaim the good news of Jesus to the world. “You will be my witnesses,” Jesus said, “in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The ends of the earth? Talk about culture shock for us! Talk about a diverse audience! And our mission field today is just as diverse! While God has graciously done his church a solid and dropped the ends of the earth right in our backyard, such diverse backgrounds and experiences of those around us can leave us feeling unable to speak to those around us about Jesus. “What if they dismiss what I have to say? What if they don’t think I understand their experiences? What if I don’t know everything about their culture? What if I can’t speak their language very well?”

That all seems to be confirmed when the world to whom we witness fires back “You don’t understand.” And, chances are, they are absolutely right. We don’t.

But does that mean the validity or truthfulness of the Christian message is lost? Does our ability to talk to others as Christians boil down to whether or not we’ve experienced the exact same things as the people to whom we’re witnessing? Because if that’s the case, then we might as well hang it up.



Proclaiming with power - continued

But that's not the case.

You don't need to have experienced everything someone has experienced to proclaim the reality of the gospel not just with them, but *for* them. Who our God is and what he has graciously won and done for the world is not contingent on whether or not you—as a Christian—understand in experiential entirety what the person you're speaking with has gone through.

There's gentleness and respect when we bend a loving ear and listen to someone's story. There's power in sharing your own personal story of how Christ personally died for you, and how that same Jesus personally died for the person listening to you. There's gospel-driven love in personally sharing the gospel uniquely to a unique person.

In spite of the fact you most certainly do not share their exact experiences, how powerful it is for you to remind them that you share the same Jesus. How powerful it is to remind them that at the other end of their catalog of all the confusion, the questions, the hurt, the heartache, and the pain in their lives, their Jesus is still there.

Never be ashamed of the message you share. It's power rests not in *who you are* but in *who God is*. There is power in the gospel—power, even in spite of you! So listen, ask questions, and seek to understand—and find comfort knowing you don't have to share their exact experiences to share Jesus. Your Savior is the world's Savior.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, work in us a confidence to proclaim your word with the world. Give me eyes to see opportunities to share your saving love, and a heart of compassion to model your love to others in my life. Give me the words to say and the confidence to say it. Amen.