WNBS Nov 18

> Date: 2026-11-18
> Location: First Baptist Church Tallassee
> Instructor: Daniel Free

Summary

Daniel Free teaches from Romans 1:14–16 about Paul's continuing obligation and eagerness to proclaim the gospel to all people, regardless of culture, education, intelligence, or social standing. Because sin makes every person accountable to God and grace forgives the debt believers owe, those who have received grace become responsible to share it with others. The lesson emphasizes humanity's need for salvation, the reality and severity of hell, the urgency of reaching people who have not heard the gospel, and the importance of prayer, sound Scripture teaching, and faithful witness. Believers are called to examine whether their theology fuels their witness and to serve both locally and globally.

Knowledge Points

1. Prayer, Christian fellowship, and spiritual formation

- **The importance of gathering for prayer**
  - Free reminds the congregation that weekly meetings are about more than opening Scripture; praying together is also important. He encourages attendees to pick up both the lesson notes and a copy of the prayer list.
  - He recounts that during a previous lesson, while praying for students at Centrifuge and asking God to work in their lives, his daughter came to faith. By God's grace, she was baptized the Sunday before this lesson. He presents this as a reminder that corporate prayer matters and that God alone transforms hearts.
- **God's work in changing people**
  - God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent: He knows all, has all power, and is present everywhere. People do not possess these attributes or the power to transform sinners; that work belongs to God.
  - Free praises God for changing his daughter's heart and stresses that the transformation of sinners is God's work.

- **The value of sound teaching**
    - Free cites theologian Voddie Baucham's warning that the modern church can produce "passionate people with empty heads" who love a Jesus they do not know well.
    - He expresses gratitude for men who prepare to teach Scripture, naming Trey, Jeff, and Scott, and emphasizes the importance of their weekly study and teaching.

2. Paul's background, calling, and service

- **Paul's formation and the providence of God**
    - Paul studied under Gamaliel, whom Free describes, based on extra-biblical Jewish literature, as one of the wisest and most pious Pharisees of his era. Gamaliel is also the figure in Acts 5 whom God used to prevent the Sadducees from harming the apostles.
    - Free compares the significance of studying under a prominent teacher to his own experience as a graduate student of Dr. James Woody, a respected scholar of andragogy.
    - Paul was known as both Saul and Paul. Acts 13:9 says, "But Saul, who was also called Paul." Free explains that Saul was not simply a pre-Christian name and Paul a Christian name: Saul was his Jewish name, associated with the tribe of Benjamin, while Paul was his Roman name. Paul's consistent use of the Roman name marked the beginning of his work among Gentiles and helped him move between Jewish and Gentile contexts.
- **Paul's transformation and endurance**
    - God transformed Paul from a persecutor of the faith into someone who gave himself radically for the advancement of the gospel.
    - As described in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul endured stoning, imprisonments, lashings, beatings, sleeplessness, hunger, and cold.
    - Paul undertook three missionary journeys, with approximately thirty-five to more than fifty stops depending on whether ports and similar locations are counted.
- **Romans 1 as a picture of Paul's purpose**
    - Free reads Romans 1:1–15 for context. The passage identifies Paul as Christ's servant, called as an apostle and set apart for God's gospel, which God had promised beforehand through the prophets in the Scriptures.
    - The gospel concerns God's Son, descended from David according to the flesh and declared Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness

by his resurrection from the dead. Through Jesus Christ, Paul received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including those called to belong to Christ.
    - Paul gives thanks for the Roman believers' widely reported faith, says he remembers them continually in prayer, and expresses his desire to visit them. He hopes to impart a spiritual gift for their strengthening and for mutual encouragement through their shared faith. Although he had often intended to come, he had been prevented and hoped to reap a harvest among them, as among other Gentiles.

- **Paul's three "I am" statements**
    - In Romans 1:14–16, Paul states, "I am under obligation," "I am eager," and "I am unashamed." The lesson focuses closely on the first two statements in verses 14–15 and introduces the third in verse 16.
    - Free notes that the Greek verbs are in the present tense, conveying an ongoing condition: Paul was not merely obligated in the past; he continued to be under obligation.
    - A commentator cited by Free describes Paul as unable to shirk the responsibility he felt deeply. Paul desired to be used to reach others and was willing to risk his life, health, and fortune for their sake.

3. The gospel obligation and the meaning of grace

- **Paul's debt to others**
    - Romans 1:14 says Paul is under obligation to Greeks and barbarians, and to the wise and the foolish. Some translations use "debtor." Free gives the Greek term as *opheletus*, describing someone literally indebted and, figuratively, delinquent or morally a transgressor against God.
    - Paul's obligation was to fulfill his divine mandate to minister to the Gentiles. Since he had received grace and apostleship (Romans 1:5), he understood that what he owed others was the gospel of grace.

- **Sin creates debt to God; grace creates responsibility to others**
    - Free quotes John Piper: "The best thing about grace is that it pays debts." People are debtors to God because they have stolen God's glory, exchanging it for things they prefer. Free presents this as the essence of sin and the debt that the gospel's grace pays.
    - Grace does not make a person a debtor to God; rather, having received grace, a person becomes a debtor to others who need grace.
    - This responsibility applies to all who are called to faith. Every person has transgressed against a holy God, including spiritually mature believers,

who can still push God aside. Free warns against believing that anyone deserves grace, is better than another person, or has earned a superior standing through personal actions.
    - Citing R. C. Sproul, Free says that if God eliminated all evil, “you and I would be dead,” underscoring that people themselves are implicated in the problem of evil.

- **Grace is not earned**
    - Paul considered himself undeserving, yet grace came to him and continued to come “day after day.” Since no one is more or less undeserving than he was, he considered himself a debtor to all people.
    - Culture, intelligence, education, refinement, and literacy neither qualify nor disqualify anyone for the gospel. If people qualified for grace, grace would no longer be grace.

4. The scope of the gospel and the human need for salvation

- **Greeks and barbarians represent all people**
    - Greeks included people of various nationalities who had adopted Greek language, culture, and education. They were regarded as sophisticated and elite, with a reputation for wisdom because of their interest in philosophy.
    - “Barbarian” was a term Greeks used for people who had not been trained in Greek language, culture, and education. The word evoked speech that sounded like unintelligible “bar-bar” chatter. In its narrower sense it referred to the uncultured and uneducated; more broadly, it described non-Greeks, who were regarded as unwise.
    - Together, “Greeks and barbarians” represents the entire human race. Paul’s gospel obligation therefore extends to both the world’s elite and its outcasts—to people of every culture and status.

- **The wise and the foolish**
    - The wise are characterized by acquired intelligence and the ability to use knowledge for right conduct. “Foolish” literally means “not having a mind,” but here describes unwillingness to use one’s mental capacities—mental laziness and carelessness—not a lack of intelligence.
    - The wise and foolish may parallel Greeks and barbarians, but the categories are not necessarily equivalent. They reach beyond educated and uneducated people and encompass people at every level of intelligence.

- **A posture toward people outside the faith**

    - Paul did not regard the pagans of his day with utter disdain. Believers should guard against looking down on people outside the faith, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and atheists. Paul hated sin while recognizing God's love for sinners, shown in sending His Son to die a shameful, painful, and cruel death.
    - Free cites William McDonald, who says that anyone who has Christ has the answer to humanity's deepest need: a cure for sin, a way to escape the eternal horrors of hell, and the guarantee of everlasting happiness with God. This places a solemn responsibility on believers to share the good news with people of all cultures.

- **Human beings do not naturally turn to God**
    - Free warns that believers can become numb to what people need to be saved from. Scripture rejects universalism—the idea that all people will ultimately be saved, whether in this life or after death.
    - Left to themselves, sinners do not run toward the light, confess their sins, or turn away from sin. Only God's immense grace can turn a callous, evil, darkened heart into one that desires Him.

- **The reality and severity of hell**
    - Free describes Scripture's presentation of hell as a place of misery and torment for the unrighteous. He cites descriptions including weeping and gnashing of teeth, unquenchable fire, the undying worm, and the smoke of torment rising forever, with no rest day or night.
    - Drawing on R. C. Sproul, Free describes two responses of the damned: some are devastated and weep, pleading for mercy; others express fury and accuse God, with anger that knows no bounds.
    - The lecture emphasizes that hell is real, that souls are punished there, that escape is impossible, and that punishment is forever—not a sentence that ends in release.
    - These descriptions underscore the painful and horrifying nature of hell and the urgency of the gospel message.

5. Theology, witness, and eternal consequences

- **The gospel's claims and eternal consequences**
    - The speaker originally planned to teach from 1 John 5:11–12, which says that God has given eternal life and that whoever has the Son has life, while whoever does not have the Son does not have life. John 3:36 states that whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, while whoever does not obey the Son will not see life and remains under God's wrath.

    - The speaker gives worldwide mortality figures: 55.3 million people die each year; depending on the statistics used, 151,600 to 171,000 people die each day, approximately 6,300 per hour and roughly 105 per minute. These figures do not include the 2.9 billion people who remain unreached and may live their entire lives without hearing the gospel.

- **The relationship between theology and witness**

    - The lecture repeatedly urges believers to examine whether their theology fuels or negates their witness for Christ. The speaker makes this appeal personally, mentioning a direct influence on more than 100 students five days a week and describing intense conviction while preparing the lesson.
    - Believers are urged to consider whether they carry a sense of obligation in their homes, workplaces, and extracurricular activities, or have become numb to the seriousness of eternal consequences.
    - The speaker describes a temptation to pray for God to send workers while privately asking not to be sent oneself. This reluctance is presented as doubt in God's goodness when believers seek God's will only on the condition that it meets their approval.
    - The lecture calls for prayer for a changed heart and a deeper burden for people outside the faith. Those already living out this obligation are encouraged to take others alongside them and teach them.

6. Eagerness to proclaim the gospel

- **The meaning and force of "eager"**

    - In the discussion of verse 15, the speaker highlights the Greek word *prothumos*, meaning eager. It is described as a strong word used only three times in Scripture, carrying the sense of being ready, willing, able, and passionate.
    - Talk, thought, and intention must lead to action. Faith is exercised not merely by believing the truth, but by acting on the truth believed. A distance-running starting line provides an illustration: runners are poised and ready to move when the race begins.
    - Paul's eagerness is specifically to preach the gospel. The verb and noun forms associated with preaching the gospel occur more than 60 times in Romans and mean to proclaim the good news.

- **Proclaiming the gospel verbally**

    - The lecture cites Paul Washer's distinction: a person can affirm the gospel through their life, but cannot preach the gospel through their life alone. Preaching requires opening one's mouth and speaking the word of God.

    - The gospel contradicts Roman emperor worship by declaring that there is one God and that everything originated with Him. Its message is that God forgives sins, delivers people from sin's power, and gives eternal hope.
    - The gospel comes as a gracious offer and also as a command to be obeyed. This message consumed Paul, who was eager to preach it in Rome.

- **Rome as the setting for Paul's eagerness**

    - Rome was the heart of the empire, a city of philosophers and poets, and home to every conceivable idol. It was given over to paganism, served as the seat of emperor worship, and was a center of intellectual arrogance.
    - Despite this setting, Paul declared that he was eager to preach there, demonstrating that no culture or perceived sophistication removes the need for the gospel.

7. Missionary commitment and practical response

- **Prayer for unreached people**

    - The lecture connects Christian obligation to praying through the Joshua Project and other ministries for workers to reach people groups around the world. Some people may be born and die without ever hearing the gospel.
    - The speaker applies concern for unreached people both globally and nearby, naming Wall Street, Jardenville, Kent, and Friendship, as well as Louisiana, Thailand, and Alaska.

- **Adoniram Judson's example**

    - The speaker recounts reading *To the Golden Shore*, an autobiography of Adoniram Judson, described as North America's first international missionary. Judson was exceptionally intelligent and could read Scripture by age three. He later went to college, became a deist, and eventually came to faith.
    - Judson told his parents he intended to go to people who had not heard the gospel. His parents were devastated: they saw other possible careers, such as ship's navigator, which could bring great wealth, or pastor of a church of his choice, and viewed his missionary calling as wasting his life.
    - The lecture notes that a missionary movement would grow in the decades following Judson's work, illustrating the wider impact of a person's obedience to the call to reach the unreached.

- **Willingness to go and support others who go**

    - The speaker reflects on the church's 14 years in Tallahassee and the many gospel opportunities God has provided, while urging believers not to let

comfort close their eyes and ears to a possible call elsewhere.
    - The application includes supporting children and grandchildren as disciple-makers wherever God leads them, whether to another city or to places such as Syria, the Philippines, or Turkey. The speaker warns against praying for God's will only when it aligns with personal preferences.
    - Believers are encouraged to pray for God to call their children and to use them personally to carry the gospel, whether to parts of their own city or to other parts of the world.

- **Everyday platforms and varied forms of service**
    - Homes, workplaces, schools, extracurricular activities, and careers are settings for gospel witness. A career choice can be one of a person's largest platforms for the gospel.
    - Potential avenues of service include taking others along to teach them, short-term or long-term missions, training to go to another city, moving, and sharing the gospel in one's local community.
    - The speaker describes himself jokingly as a quiet, unusual "plant guy," but stresses that personality does not remove the obligation shared by all believers.
    - The lecture quotes William Carey: "Half secret discipleship is the devil's compromise."

- **The church's desired outcome and prayer**
    - The speaker's goal is for the church to reevaluate its practices, seek a changed heart where it has become numb, and develop a deep burden for people outside the faith. Those already serving faithfully are encouraged to help others learn to do the same.
    - The prayer for the church is for unity in Christ and faithfulness over the coming days, weeks, months, years, and decades, so that lives may be transformed in Tallahassee, Elmore County, Alabama, other states and cities, and the nations.
    - The closing prayer gives thanks for God's work in believers, acknowledges their unworthiness and their deserving of hell, praises God's grace in calling them from darkness to life, and asks for a burden for others and boldness to proclaim the gospel—the only way to eternal life and eternal worship of God.

Assignments

- [ ] Participate in the congregation's prayer life: obtain the prayer list and pray for those on it, including people who need God to work in their lives.

- [ ] Pray for a deeper burden for people outside the faith and for boldness to proclaim the gospel.
- [ ] Evaluate whether your theology is fueling or diminishing your witness at home, work, school, in your career, and in your community.
- [ ] Share the gospel with people across cultures and social groups, recognizing the responsibility to pass on the grace received.
- [ ] Consider practical ways to serve locally or globally, including supporting others called to go, taking someone along to teach them, and exploring short-term or long-term missions.