

“The Spirit’s Use of Long-Distance Partnerships”
from Romans 1:8-12 (NASB)

Pastor Michael Head – Indian Hills Baptist Church, Silver City, NM
Sunday, January 22, 2017 – Senegal Sunday

This week I.H.B.C. is sending a “vision team” to Senegal, west Africa. This Lord’s Day we remind ourselves about God’s calling on us as individuals and a congregation, celebrate our Southern Baptist identity, and commit to pray for our future mission partnership with our missionaries in Senegal.

Going for Fellowship in the Spirit (1:8-12)

1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. 1:9 For God, Whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, 1:10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. 1:11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; 1:12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine.

Christian Fellowship Is Never Closed (1:8-10)

- Paul didn’t start this church in Rome, and has never met them face-to-face.
- God works through local congregations in all places.¹ He intends for these local churches to associate and

¹ “A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons” (*Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, VI).

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work together for His global mission.² Human-created boundaries, whether they are city limits, national borders, or ethnicity are not to define Christian fellowship and partnership in pursuing Christ’s commanded “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Spirit-Fellowship (1:11,12)

- When Paul says, “*spiritual gift*,” we must read this with a capital “S.” The Spirit-given gifts he longed for himself and for the Romans came through their fellowship together.
- Spirit-given gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Peter 4:10,11) are given for the good of the Church, not the individual, and they are fruitful to the fullest in self-sacrificing and robust exercise in Christian service and fellowship.

From Jerusalem to the End of the World (15:25-29)

15:25...now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 15:27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. 15:28 Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put

² “Christ’s people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom...” (*Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, XIV).

my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. ^{15:29}I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

Serving the Saints in Jerusalem (15:25-27)

- The background for this service can be read in **Acts 11:27-30**. God uses the hardship of the believers in Jerusalem to teach us important truths about the unity of the church and how that unity manifests God’s glory.
- 2 Corinthians 8-9, which have this offering for Jerusalem Christians as background, are the best teaching on Christian giving in the New Testament. The Macedonians, despite being poor, begged Paul for the opportunity to give to those believers in Jerusalem (8:1-5). Note:
 1. This doesn’t mean they ignored their missions/evangelism responsibility to Macedonia.
 2. They didn’t personally know the Judean believers, would probably never meet them face-to-face, and couldn’t reasonably expect the Judeans to do anything for them in return.³ In other words, they didn’t have a “how does this help us?” or “what’s in it for us?” attitude.
- Learn this principle carefully:
 - God, by His inspiring and empowering grace, moves believers to reach out and sacrificially give to help His people in other places.
 - God’s people give to help others.
 - Loving fellowship is built between believers in different places, and God is given thanks and

³ Some churches and believers only want to contribute to or pursue projects that lead to the growth of their church. Only doing things that lead to your church’s growth is not Christ-like; Christ-likeness is emptying yourself and trusting God with all else.

glory. This is the goal: God inspires Christian giving so that He will receive glory.

Through Rome to Spain (15:28,29)

- Paul is writing this letter to the Romans to strengthen and unify them in a robustly-understood Gospel so that they are a firm foundation for his taking the Gospel further west, to the borderland of the Roman Empire. From our first Lord’s Day together worshiping in this part of Scripture, we have summed up Romans like this: **Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to unify the local church for global mission through the right understanding and application of the Gospel.**⁴

A Vital Principle for Christian Spiritual Health

- Sometimes believers and churches think they must put themselves first before they help others. This is not Christ!
- **God blesses us as individuals and churches most when we, in imitation of Christ, empty ourselves in God-glorifying, loving service to others.**⁵

What It Means to Be Southern Baptist

- What does it mean to be “Southern Baptist”? While the denomination began in the South, to be “Southern Baptist” doesn’t mean a S.B.C. church is “Southern” in its culture or location.

⁴ “Our goal is to unify the local church in Spirit and Truth through the right understanding and application of God’s Word and thus enable it to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ locally and beyond, through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Indian Hills Baptist Church Consitution, II).

⁵ I often think about Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. Despite all the sufferings and trials he had, his greatest inner burden was “*concern for all the churches.*” On your list of stresses and concerns, where does the well-being of God’s congregations fall?

- It is “Baptist,” which, at its most basic level means the participating churches baptize only confessing believers, are governed by democratic processes among the membership, and believe that each individual local congregation is autonomous from all others in its decision-making.⁶
- If each Baptist church is autonomous from other churches and no outside body has any authority over it, why are we part of the Southern Baptist Convention?⁷ The answer is simple: global missions. The Southern Baptist Convention was incorporated in 1845 for the cooperative effort of Baptists toward global missions.⁸
- Since 1925, Southern Baptists have supported missions in North America and around the world through the Cooperative Program. “The Cooperative Program is

⁶ I’d encourage you to read this great article about being Southern Baptist: www.onfaith.co/discussion/10-things-i-wish-everyone-knew-about-southern-baptists

⁷ Indian Hills Baptist Church, along with all other local Southern Baptist congregations, has three levels of voluntary cooperation with other churches. We are part of the Southwestern Baptist Association, made up of Southern Baptist congregations in Luna County, Hidalgo County, Grant County, and part of Catron County. We are also part of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico. And, finally, we are part of the Southern Baptist Convention. Again, our participation in these groups is completely voluntary for the sake of cooperation in missions in southwest New Mexico, all over our great State, and around the world.

⁸ From the S.B.C. Charter: “...the Southern Baptist Convention...being created for the purpose of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the gospel...” From Article II of the S.B.C.’s Constitution: “It is the purpose of the Convention to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad...”

Southern Baptists’ unified plan of giving through which cooperating Southern Baptist churches give a percentage of their undesignated receipts in support of their respective state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention missions and ministries.”⁹

Building a Gospel Partnership in Senegal, West Africa

- By giving to the Cooperative Program, we support thousands of Southern Baptist missionaries around the world, including the missionaries in Senegal.
- Financial support, however, doesn’t mean we don’t go! Through the years, I.H.B.C. members have participated in overseas mission work, whether it was Ace and Jean Barnes (Kenya, Afghanistan, Vietnam), Michael Head and Martin Wilson (the Philippines), or Lequita Lett (Russian Federation). Lequita’s involvement in Russia led to a cooperation between I.H.B.C. and Russian Baptists in Ufa, Bashkortostan, Russian Federation – this cooperation led to us bringing several of our Russian brothers here in 2011. Due to shortfalls in giving to international missions, however, the S.B.C.’s International Mission Board had to bring a thousand missionaries home, including our missionary in Russia, Chris Carr.
- After the door was shut on the relationship between I.H.B.C. and our Baptist brothers and sisters in Ufa, we began praying about a new place to build a long-term relationship. Christians are healthiest spiritually when serving others. We’ve been led to Senegal, west Africa, and our missionaries there.¹⁰

⁹ www.sbc.net/cp

¹⁰ I say they are “our” missionaries because they have been sent by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Even Paul was sent by the Holy Spirit through a local church (Acts 13:1-4); Paul remained accountable to that local church, returning to give a report of his missionary/church-planting work (Acts 14:26-28). True Christian mission work is rooted in the Spirit’s sending from the

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Our Three-Tiered Partnership with Senegal

Financial Support

- As part of the Southern Baptist Convention, I.H.B.C. gives a percentage of your offerings to the Cooperative Program, which directly supports our missionaries in Senegal.
- In addition, you gave generously to help send our “vision team” to Senegal.

Prayer

- Our prayer is a way we directly and powerful support mission work. The apostle Paul and Timothy said this about the importance of prayer in Gospel mission: *“...we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God Who raises the dead; Who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on Whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many”* (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).
- The apostle, in his prayer requests, frequently asks that the church pray for his presenting the Gospel: **READ Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-6.** Is Paul’s prayer request yours? Will you pray this prayer over I.H.B.C.’s efforts on behalf of the Gospel here in Silver City and around the world?

local church and accountability to the local church – there are no “Lone Ranger” missionaries or church planters.

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On the Ground in Senegal

- Jim & Tricia Reynolds and Johanna Wilson are our “vision team.” This initial visit to Senegal is to learn how our missionaries work there, and to see how we can participate in their work in the future. Depending on how the Lord leads and provides, there is room for us to send two teams a year and to be assigned an entire village for outreach (we are possibly going to expand this partnership to include our fellow S.B.C. churches in the area).
- Morale matters. By personally involving ourselves in the lives and service of our missionaries in Senegal, we are providing much-needed fellowship and encouragement to those living their lives for the sake of the Gospel in Senegal.

