

GRAND MARAIS PRAYER INITIATIVE

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MISSION

Cultivate an urgency for unified prayer through its committed/disciplined practice.

VISION

Holy Spirit-led prayer movement makes disciples & transforms the community by radiating Christ-like character.

PRAYER MAP FOR FEBRUARY 2022

The central topic for this month's prayer map (attached at the end of this newsletter) is "Freedom in Jesus". December's map used Romans 8:1-2 as a platform to examine 1) the Spiritual economy Jesus extolled as part of His ministry, 2) the way in which man's sinful nature thwarts the Spiritual economy, and 3) the role our dependency on Jesus plays in embracing it.

This month's map outlines from what our dependency on Jesus has set us free and the manifestations of such freedom. The motivation for exploring this further comes from Romans 8:2:

"For the law of the Spirit of life *has set you free in Christ Jesus* from the law of sin and death." (ESV, emphasis added)

The biggest obstacle to the ministries of Jesus and his disciples (including the Apostle Paul) came from religious authorities who imposed their own set of rules on those who sought to comply with God's. As it always seems to play out with rules imposed by man to

justify himself before others, such religious rules usurped the freedom God intended for His children. In most of his letters, the Apostle Paul devotes attention to discrediting this tendency of false teachers. The following examples are but a few wherein he reminds his churches not to return to the man-made religious order under which they had formerly been held captive:

"If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." Colossians 2:20–23 (ESV)

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1 (ESV)

"For you were called to freedom, brothers." Galatians 5:13a (ESV)

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." 2 Corinthians 3:17 (ESV)

What is it about man's sinful nature that leads him to fall prey to legalistic religious systems? Is it his innate desire to be deemed more worthy of respect than others because of his performance and/or his knowledge? Is it because legalistic systems can provide cover for personal and/or corporate shortcomings that might otherwise be exposed and criticized? Is it because man is innately compelled to be in control of his destiny? Is it because legalistic systems might offer unfair advantage to one group over another? Is it jealousy? Only God knows. What we can be sure of is that the list of questions in this paragraph posing answers to the first question is woefully incomplete to explain

what happened in the 500-600 years between the time God gave His Law to Moses and the time of the prophets. David Stern, when dissecting Galatians chapter 5 in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, quotes a noted rabbi to provide an example of how the Mosaic Law was winnowed to its simplest terms during that time:

“Rabbi Simlai said, ‘613 commandments were given to Moses...David came and reduced them to eleven (Psalm 15), Isaiah to six (Isaiah 33:15), Micah to Three (Micah 6:8), and Isaiah again to two—“Observe justice and do righteousness” (Isaiah 56:1). Then Amos came and reduced them to one, “Seek me and live” (Amos 5:4)—as did Habakkuk, “The righteous one will live by his trusting” (Habakkuk 2:4).”¹

Despite the prophets’ efforts to bring attention to Israel and Judah’s covenantal failures to abide by the simplest terms of the Mosaic Law, no effort appeared to be successful since—as stated earlier—Jesus’ message was violently opposed by the religious authorities. Jesus’ death, resurrection, and glorification changed everything! Jesus’ promise to all who love Him and keep His commandments is that “[He] will ask the Father and [the Father] will give them another helper to be with them forever, even the Spirit of truth² (i.e., the Holy Spirit). This statement, together with Jesus’ statement at the Feast of Booths³ suggests that the gift of the Holy Spirit comes from the God the Father at Jesus’ request. Accordingly, we can reasonably state that the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence is dependent upon a person’s belief and faith in Jesus. Once in possession of the Holy Spirit, believers begin, in earnest, their journey toward Christ-likeness.

Somewhere early in-route to Christ-likeness, Christian believers realize that they have come under influence of the Holy Spirit because they experience a change in their daily lives. Sin gradually loses its dominion over them, they begin to triage sinful desires and practices, and they grow in Biblical wisdom and discernment. Further, they recognize their growth in Christ is a result of God’s grace through faith in Jesus and no work that they have done to merit the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence.

The text from 2 Corinthians 3:17 (see above) stipulates “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Two logical questions arise from this statement: 1) freedom from or for what? and 2) how does the Holy Spirit provide such freedom? The left half of February’s prayer map identifies four areas of life where Holy Spirit-mediated freedoms are manifested. Table 1 on the following page reflects information presented in the prayer map and adds how the Holy Spirit acts to preserve the freedoms for which Jesus’ sacrifice has qualified us.

FEBRUARY’S PRAYER MAP: HOW TO USE IT

February’s prayer map seeks to serve as a daily reminder of what the Apostle Paul states in Colossians 1:26-28:

“...the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to [God’s] saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. (ESV)

Use the map as part of your daily prayers to praise God for His infinite wisdom and grace in reconciling us to Him through Jesus’ sacrifice, thereby freeing us from every Satan-induced endeavor that could otherwise enslave us. The law of sin and death (our sinful nature driving us toward a legalistic system of

¹ Stern, David. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992. Page 565.

² See John chapter 14:15-16.

³ John 7:37-39: “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (ESV)

earning God’s approval through our own works) would pull us in the direction of slavery, but the Apostle John reminds us in his letter “... He who is in [us] is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

To make the most sense of February’s prayer map, the first offshoots from the central concept should be read in a clockwise manner starting with the offshoot in the map’s upper right quadrant and ending with the offshoot in the map’s upper left quadrant. Further, the arms extending from each offshoot of the central concept should be read from bottom to top.

Table 1. Areas of Life in Which the Holy Spirit Acts to Preserve Our Freedom in Jesus

Areas of Life	From/For What We Are Freed	Holy Spirit-Mediated Actions
Living in accordance with God’s Law without being enslaved by legalistic demands	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Freed from bondage to sin 2. Freed from constant judgments by and/or comparisons with man-made legalistic standards 3. Freed from the need to justify our salvation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Constantly reminds us that Jesus has reconciled us to God in order to present us holy and blameless and above reproach before Him. 2. Fills us with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. 3. Strengthens us with all power, according to God’s glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 4. By His instruction He delivers us from the domain of darkness and transfers us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <p><i>NOTE: Point 1 in this column is taken from Colossians 1:21-22; Points 2-4 from Colossians 1:9-14</i></p>
Living without fear	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Freed from fear we are not worthy of the salvation Jesus provides 2. Freed from doubts about God’s presence in our life due to suffering and/or other difficult challenges 3. Freed from transient failures of character 4. Freed from feeling God has rejected our prayers 	
Experiencing kingdom moments here on earth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To witness agape-type love at work in Christian fellowship 2. To witness God’s answers to prayer 3. To feel God’s presence as we worship and praise Him together 	
Living “off-the-clock”, i.e., patiently awaiting God to work out His plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Freed from anxiety over the time and effort it takes to achieve a kingdom-related outcome 2. Freed from believing we are in control of kingdom-related outcomes 3. Freed from believing we know what God should be doing 	

WANT TO KNOW MORE? WANT TO ADD SOMETHING TO THIS NEWSLETTER? HAVE OTHER SUGGESTIONS?

Pray-ers are encouraged to contribute input that would provide for the outgrowth of Spirit-led prayer in the community. Email the editor a note at online@grandmaraisfree.church if you have something that should be shared to encourage others’ growth in prayer!

Grand Marais Prayer Initiative Freedom In Jesus Christ February 2022 Prayer Map

