

GRAND MARAIS PRAYER INITIATIVE

April 2022 Newsletter / Issue 11

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 APRIL 2022

The central topic for this month's prayer map (attached at the end of this newsletter) is "Just & Righteous End to Oppression". The Oxford English Dictionary defines oppression as prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control¹. The basis for examining this concept has as its source the hideous, blatant, and widescale atrocities we are witnessing daily in Ukraine. Such oppression is rooted in everything the LORD hates:

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. Proverbs 6:16–19 (ESV)

The frightening display of evil and suffering unleashed when these character traits are allowed—even worse, encouraged—to grow unbridled comes as a shock and we feel hopelessly inadequate to bring it to an immediate and just end. As a result, we plead for

God to do so.

This month's prayer map is meant to help conform our collective pleas to prayers offered by God's people under similar circumstances and for which we have some evidence of His immediate relief. Several Biblical accounts of prayers for God's intervention in overcoming an unjust oppressor's violence come to mind. As one example, during King Hezekiah's reign in Judah the Assyrian king Sennacherib's troops were encamped outside Jerusalem threatening to destroy it. Hezekiah's plea to God in the face of this imminent threat was as follows:

And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: "O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone." 2 Kings 19:15–19 (ESV)

God answered King Hezekiah's prayer through Isaiah and eliminated the threat with immediate and humanly inconceivable follow through:

¹ See <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/oppression>. Synonyms listed for oppression include persecution, abuse, maltreatment, ill treatment, tyranny, despotism, repression, suppression, subjection, subjugation, enslavement, exploitation, cruelty, ruthlessness, harshness, brutality, injustice, hardship, misery, suffering, pain, anguish, and wretchedness.

Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your prayer to me about Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard”...And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. 2 Kings 19:20 & 35-36 (ESV)

Other examples of prayers made in the face of unjust oppression include King David’s prayers in Psalms 10², 35 & 64. Although we cannot say these prayers were answered in the same manner of immediacy as were those of King Hezekiah, we know that King David ultimately prevailed against his enemies, implying that they were answered. The text of each of these three prayers, along with King Hezekiah’s prayer in 2 Kings, is provided on this month’s prayer map.

The essence of all four of the above prayers is that the pray-ers leave the method for overcoming the source of oppression to God who exercises justice and righteousness.

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” Jeremiah 9:23–24 (ESV)

Although this month’s prayer map mostly stays true to letting God come up with the just and righteous intervention needed in cases of oppression, some specific thoughts are provided of what might be reflective of His doing—that is, beyond human comprehension and thus clearly attributable to Him—in the case of Ukraine’s oppression by outside forces. The map also recognizes the need for Christian believers to be bold and courageous in confronting oppression when and where it first becomes apparent; that is, at a local level.

APRIL’S PRAYER MAP: HOW TO USE IT

This month’s prayer map seeks to serve as a daily reminder of the evil that can come from failing to confront oppressive behavior when it first becomes obvious. Use the map as part of your daily prayers to 1) praise God for the sovereignty He exerts in His exercise of justice and righteousness over those who contrive evil plans and implement them, 2) ask God to give us a bold and courageous heart in confronting oppression when we see it, 3) plead for His intervention in the case of Ukraine’s oppression by outside forces, 4) ask for Him to impart wisdom to world leaders trying to right oppressive wrongs, 5) plead that those being oppressed would find comfort through kindness having its root in Him, 6) plead that families would be reunited, the grief-stricken consoled, and shielded from further harm, and 7) that we will be watchful for His answer and be prepared to give Him glory.

To make the most sense of April’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.

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!

² Although Psalm 10 is not specifically ascribed to King David, it is believed to be a companion of Psalm 9 which is labeled “A Psalm of David”.

