

*I am a companion of all them that fear Thee.....  
(Psalm 119:63)*

*Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof...  
(Ezekiel 9:4)*

*Go cry in the ears of Jerusalem...  
(Jeremiah 2:2)*

*A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel. Gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us.  
(Jer. 4:8)*

*My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart...  
(Jeremiah 4:19)*

*Night and day praying exceedingly...  
(1 Thessalonians 3:10)*

*I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.  
(1 Timothy 2:8)*

Dear Friend,

Suppose this was the criteria you desired to apply to a search for a biblical local body of believers. If your heart was stirred to seek out pastors and brethren who had a prayer burden like the scriptures describe godly men of former days, where would you go to look for them? For myself, I did not bother to go looking for such men because I did not believe they existed in America in these days. I was not interested in the charismatic circles; at first glance their prayers were passionate, but there was no practical holiness, and the women did not in the slightest resemble the biblical mandate for godliness as taught in the books of Timothy and Titus. Among our dear conservative homeschool and home churching friends we engaged in some challenging discussions, but in us and them the pervading spirit of individualism and independence hindered any true unity or yielding to one another.

We continued seeking separation from a sin-sick society. The epidemic was spreading into our children. Our search led us to the 'plain people'; a very unique group in fact. Here I found a large measure of solace, a sincere and sober-minded small group that lived in peace and good will among each other. I could see that they were clearly steeped in tradition. The women's conversations revolved around domestic life. And there was no spontaneous heartfelt prayer. But this place offered peace and security and safety to a widow and her children, so I was thankful for this blessed option. Yet with my limited

understanding and a hungering for spiritual reality, there was an emptiness inside which did not seem to have a remedy.

Then, at a Bible conference, quite unexpectedly, I met some young men with zeal. This was something completely different than anything in my experience up until that time. After a short conversation, I had a deep desire for my five children at home to hear these testimonies and feel the spirit behind the words and experiences of these men. It was one miracle (with many more to follow) that they came to my home in their traveling tabernacle (Big RV) and stayed for eight days. I was in for one astounding surprise after another. First of all, their main occupation was "Seeking the Lord". Myself and my older daughters read the Bible and said prayers for hours each day, but this was something altogether different. The next evident reality was that these men had a burden for souls. In fact, that was what they sought the Lord about, and for. I had no comprehension of how this deep heart desire in them motivated their lives. The first time they knelt and prayed in my home, something changed in all of us, and we had been given a revelation of a spiritual reality we had heretofore been ignorant existed. One of the men had a very sober concern and compassion for my youngest child, so much so that I was nearly tempted to be offended.

As neighbors, friends, and church members met the "evangelists", some biblical realities began to settle in on us. What to me was as living waters to my soul proved to be a most threatening intrusion to some people, particularly ministers. This was a great sadness and shock to me, since these men had something our "church" lacked. Suspicions were aroused on every side. I could clearly see that these men were endangering their lives to preach this gospel. I was stunned, because their preaching was almost entirely the word of God. I had never known any man who spoke the way these men did or preached on the authority of the Bible alone. A dozen or so men were indeed stirred and convicted at the obvious lack in their lives. On several occasions, they gathered in their "traveling tabernacle" to lift up prayers to God. The power of God the Holy Spirit was with these men. One evening in a dear friend's home, a young man knelt down to pray before he preached, and it was as if a mighty, terrible lion had roared in our midst. I knew it was the Spirit of God warning and testifying to every soul in that room. It was possibly the most fearful experience of my life up until that time.

Eventually, the Lord began to gather a small flock of believers to Dallas, Texas. Life among our professing Christian friends was becoming more uncomfortable, as it seemed that their lives were generally continuing in the same direction and my household was becoming more and more dissatisfied with our practice of religion. My daughters traveled to Dallas and each of them in their soul experienced the miracle of saving faith and regeneration. I could clearly see in each of them that old things had passed away and all things had become new. Yet even with all of the light I HAD RECEIVED BY THE PREACHING OF THE EVANGELISTS, and my own conviction that my "Christian" experience did not resemble theirs, I was still much too proud to consider that perhaps I was not a true follower of Jesus Christ. Although my girls were set on joining the church of young people in Dallas, that was not my desire. However, I did agree to go and visit before they moved to Texas.

The first day I was there, I was persuaded that I had never had any experience or change of life that qualified as salvation, but more troubling than that was what it was going to take to “prick” my proud, self-righteous heart and make it humble, broken and contrite. In the weeks that followed, I learned the meaning of “soul travail”. This place was not “normal”. These people were not “normal”. They were the most peculiar group I had ever had the privilege of being around. Prayer happened everywhere, all hours of the day and night. Since few of the brethren were working at this point in time, everyone's chief occupation was “Seeking the Lord”. All of the interaction among all of the people was of a spiritual nature, and everyone's primary concern was to seek the Lord's will even in the most everyday essential duties. The house where I was staying at the time was also the “church house” and had many people coming and going throughout the day and night. There was an uncommon fellowship and bond of affection that was clearly evidenced. The most amazing times I spent there were during their prayer meetings. I would be seeking the Lord in my own room, but at recurring times throughout the many hours they were gathered, I could hear someone lift up their voice in fervent petitions - there was weeping over sin and lost souls, and I remember the first time I heard one of the men crying out for my soul, and I was shaken to the core of my being to think that this person loved me enough to weep for me. It was also a great shock to realize that they were seriously grieved at what a proud person I was. I did not have comprehension about these kinds of prayers and intercessions, but as I read the Bible many hours each day, it was as if scales had fallen from my eyes and I could now see clearly; I began to realize that this was indeed what the scriptures were talking about when it came to coming before the throne of God. Though I was tempted many times with uprisings in my own flesh, I had to confess before God, every time, that this gathering of people could in no wise be the doing of any man. I always had to come back to the truth that the fault was in me when offenses would arise.

When God granted me the grace to realize that my life was a dunghill without Him and the deeds of my flesh were an offense to Him, then God stepped down from heaven and healed my troubled soul and gave me a new life. From that point until this day, almost two and a half years later, God has given me innumerable memorial stones to build an altar of faith in my life. Many, if not most, of these precious stones are an undeniable witness from heaven that God's Spirit is alive in these people. There is a present neediness before God; a humble pleading for His mercies, forgiveness, and condescension to His hungry children. When I hear my brethren humbly confess their sin and weep before God, it does a deep work in my own heart to convince me that I too am guilty and need forgiveness, as well as recognizing my responsibility to help my brother or sister achieve victory over sin. Another set of precious stones in this building of God are the tears and intercessions for sinners, whether they be loved ones, or family members of the brethren, or a stranger on the street. I can say of a truth that my three dear shepherds have spent days and nights travailing in the bowels of their souls and pained in their hearts for the sheep scattered on the hills, saved men and women who ARE DECEIVED AND UNDER a delusion because of the preaching of false prophets. Many a night I have been awakened by the sound of voices, sometimes singing hymns, sometimes a lonely pilgrim out in the fields or in a shed crying out to God. Since that first night that I was shaken by the praying of a man filled with the Spirit of God, there have been many occasions when I have been in the same house when a handful of desperate

men cry out to God and rend the heavens, lifting up their voices. The presence of God is not limited to times of prayer. We have all been moved and shaken and enveloped with a holy hush by preaching, exhortations, rebukes, singing, and even silence.

Oh my churchgoing friend, I ask you, is this your experience in your congregation? Is this too radical for you? Is this not the reason you gather for religious services? Sadly, I know this is not the desire of most professing Christians. However, if you get out your Bible and look to see what God says about the assembly of His people, you will find it described in this way. In the midst of many slanders and persecutions, I am thankful to say that these light afflictions are doing a deeper work in me. Every time I have an ear to hear the voice of Christ in my brethren and the Spirit of the Holy God melts my eyes to tears, I thank Him for the building of my altar of faith unto Him.