



## *Begging for Spiritual Help*

*by Gene Easley*

The many destitute people in Guatemala will break your heart. Watching human suffering is never an enjoyable sight. We have seen the small street children run into fast food restaurants, picking up a part of a hamburger or a few French fries left by the last customer. They then dart back out the front door before an employee can catch them. It really isn't right that they should have to live that way. They did not ask for it, and there is really nothing they can do but try to survive.

We have observed the beggars standing on the street corners. For some of them it is just a way of life. They will faithfully be at their position as if being paid by an employer on a regular job. Some despise their need to beg, but life has left them no other outlets but to beg, steal, or die. The more honorable will beg.

Jose Luis Salazar was a young man twenty-six years old, who found himself begging and living like a tramp on the streets of Guatemala City.

It was never a strange occurrence to have a beggar appear at our front door. It was simply a part of Guatemalan missionary life. When Jose showed up at the gate to our apartment complex one day, it was just routine to give him food and help him on his way. But Jose's story would not be routine.

Jose would ring the bell at the gate and either Jean or I would go and answer. He would always ask for a piece of cold bread, "Pan frio." It was his way of letting you know he was hungry and would eat anything. Jean would always prepare him a good sack lunch. Then it would be a week or two before Jose would appear again.

One day when Jose came by, we had just purchased some small New Testaments and decided to put one in Jose's sack of food.

Jose's next visit to our home was on a Sunday morning about eight o'clock. Jean went out to the gate to answer the bell. Jose asked for the same piece of cold bread. Jean prepared the food and I took it out to Jose. After I handed him the food, he looked at me and in a very serious tone of voice said, "I have another need this morning. I wonder if you can help me." I had no idea what he was wanting. We have been requested to provide many different items. One young man asked me to buy him a pair of Nike tennis shoes on my next trip to the States. He thought that would be no problem for me whom he presumed to be a wealthy American.

I asked Jose what his need was. He looked at me with a very serious look and said, "I have a spiritual need this morning. I wonder if you can help me." I instantly began to pray for God's help. I did not want to lose this opportunity.

Jose began his story, "Remember the little New Testament you put with my food the last time. Well, I used to be a Christian. I served God and was faithful to church. But I had problems in my life. As a result I became discouraged. I began to go back to the bars and to drink again. Soon I lost my job and lost my family. Everything was gone and I ended up in the streets begging for food in order to stay alive. "But as I began to read that New Testament, God began to speak to my heart again. And I wonder this morning if you can help me?"

Jose was begging for spiritual help! I invited him into our apartment. After talking for a while, we kept in prayer and Jose gave his heart back to God. It was a glorious experience. The Spirit of the Lord came down and gave wonderful assurance to Jose's heart that God had heard his prayer and everything was right again with God.

Being Sunday morning, we were in the process and preparing to leave for church and Sunday school. We, naturally, invited Jose to go with us. He gladly accepted, but he had one problem troubling him. He looked a mess. He looked the part of a tramp! His hair and beard were dirty and matted. His clothes were ragged. His sockless toes stuck out of the holes in his shoes. He wanted to clean up. So after a shower, shave and one of my white shirts to wear, along with a clean pair of socks, Jose was ready to go.

We literally had trouble recognizing him after he cleaned up and put on clean clothes. But the thing so strikingly different about him was a smile on his face that we had never witnessed before. Jose was a new man.

We attended the church services that morning. Jose stood up and testified to that strange congregation about what God did for him that Sunday morning.

The next day we took Jose shopping for clothes and shoes. He said he wanted to find a job but no one would hire him looking like he did. Within two days Jose had a good job working as a welder. His life after months on the streets and living in the gutters was totally turned around. Thank God for His amazing grace!

The last we heard from Jose, he told us that everywhere he went he was telling them what God did for him that Sunday morning. He also said he felt like God was calling him to preach the Gospel!