

—Mexican Trails Along the Way—
Series

A man with a mustache, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, a light-colored long-sleeved button-down shirt, and blue trousers, stands in front of a rustic stone wall. The background is filled with lush green foliage and small pink flowers. The overall scene is set outdoors in a natural, possibly rural, environment.

ROSAS

Martha Johnson

BAPTIST MISCELLANEOUS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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About the Author

Martha Lucas Johnson grew up under the ministry of Bro. Gaylon Henry in the South Park Baptist Church of Ft. Worth, Texas. Her parents, J. L. and Ruby Lucas, are charter members of that church and J. L. serves as a deacon. It was in this setting that Martha gained valuable experience which has helped her in her desire to help young girls to grow in their service to Christ.



Martha attended Jacksonville College where she met her husband, Buddy Johnson. They have served in the pastorate in Texas and as missionaries in Mexico. Their thirteen years in Mexico have helped Martha develop a desire to share the stories of some of the men with whom they live and work.

This book is one of the many stories which is intended to help American Christians understand the faith of Mexican Christians and to support them in prayer.

The Johnsons are the parents of five sons: Grady, Scott, Eric, Jonathan, and Benjamin; and one daughter, Sara.

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Writer Martha Johnson and Francisco Rosas.

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—Mexican Trails Along the Way—
Series

Rosas

Lucas
Martha Johnson, 1945 —
(Illustrated by Shirley Hoffpaulr)

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this book to the two people that God used to form my life and prepare me for His service.

To my parents:

Johnie and Ruby Lucas

With all my love and appreciation for their influence in my life.

Martha L. Johnson

In Appreciation

I want to thank all of the people who have patiently helped with this manuscript: Marilyn Lash, Ruth Rhodes, Shirley Hoffpauir, Texas Women's Missionary Auxiliary, and the photographer, Alberto Canche.

I thank especially *The Baptist Progress* and Danny and Dian Pope for their tireless encouragement and corrections.

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Preface

I consider it an honor to be asked to write the preface to this book. Once you begin reading it, you'll have to continue to the conclusion. The book is so graphic, touching, and easy to read. It is a story for all ages. It is the second book by the author in a series entitled **Mexican Trails Along the Way**.

This book is special to me for many reasons. I was Martha's pastor during her teenage years. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Lucas, are charter members of South Park Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, where I am pastoring. Martha's life as a missionary's wife is a great testimony.

Having visited the mission fields of Old Mexico on four different occasions, I am familiar with the people, their customs, and the various places mentioned in this book. I have met Bro. Rosas and his wife. It was a distinct privilege to eat a meal in their modest home, a blessing that I shall never forget.

Reading this book should cause us to be more thankful for the bountiful blessings we enjoy each day in the United States. It should give us a burning desire to support and send

missionaries into every village on earth. I know that God will bless both the ministry of this book and its author. I believe you will find this book every bit as interesting and moving as the author's first book, **Pablo**.

Gaylan Henry, Pastor
South Park Baptist Church
Fort Worth, Texas

Introduction

On April 21, 1519, Hernando Cortez and a company of 555 Spanish soldiers landed on a beach very near present-day Veracruz, Mexico. They came looking for riches and power. They found both. Cortez, demented by his hunger for power, would stop at nothing to gain control of this beautiful land. To assure the loyalty of his men, Cortez burned his ships. He then led them on an incredible overland march to Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital at the site of present-day Mexico City.

This magnificent city with its grand palaces, gardens, and fountains had a population of about 300,000. Moctezuma was its ruler. Clearly, Cortez could not expect to overpower this empire. But neither was he a man to give up such wealth. Through a series of daring and, at times miraculous events, Cortez did conquer all in 1521. By this time, the Aztec had a new leader. Cuauhtemoc was a valiant leader who fought to the bitter end to defend his people. When he was finally captured, his magnificent Tenochtitlan lay in

ruins littered with dead bodies. Throwing himself at the feet of Cortez, he said, "I have done all I could to defend myself and my people, till I am reduced to this wretched state. You can do with me now what you will." Thus, one of the greatest empires of the New World was reduced to a wretched state.

That night a dreadful storm broke on the city. Some would say the abandoned Aztec gods were taking their vengeance out on all involved. The Aztecs had many false gods, as they worshipped the different elements of nature. They believed these gods rewarded or punished them in accordance with their sacrifices to them. Their religious ceremonies were elaborate and sometimes included human sacrifices to appease these false gods.

Spain, having conquered Mexico, quickly began to send Catholic priests to "convert the heathens." As news of Cuauhtemoc's defeat spread, this was an easy task. Having had many gods, it was not hard for the Aztecs to accept the saints and idols of the Spanish. They were obviously more powerful, as the Spanish had won the victory. The Aztecs, impressed by the ceremonies and elegant

robes of the priests, were taught memorized prayers, sprinkled with water and made "Christians." Those who rebelled were tortured and killed. But for most it was not a hard change, as their new church allowed them to bring many of their traditions and customs with them. They were forbidden to make human sacrifices. But their victims had always been enemies captured in battle. Now there were no victims. The religion that evolved was a strange mixture of witchcraft and Christianity, whose main hold on the people were traditions and fear.

In 1547, a Catholic church building was begun in an Aztec trading center called Huejutlan (the n was later dropped). This rock church building was built using Aztec labor. It took 35 years to complete. Now, instead of sacrificing to appease their old gods, the Aztecs give their labor and the wealth of their land to their new gods.

After 400 years, this religion had still not taught the Aztecs that "God is love." He loved them and they should love others. Many seemed to have no emotion. They simply

lived each day, accepting the good and bad as destiny.

Around this trade center, Huejutla, were literally hundreds of smaller Aztec villages. Through the centuries, life in the villages changed very slowly. In 1931, Francisco Rosas was born in Itzocatl, one of the villages. His family lived in a one room, grass-roofed hut, as did all their neighbors. The men planted corn and black beans. The women cooked tortillas and beans on fires on the floor. The whole family slept on a straw mat on the floor. The native dress was white, knee-length bloomers and white loose shirts for men. The women wore colorful skirts and white blouses with animals or flowers embroidered on them. Boys typically went naked till the age of 5 or 6, when they began to wear a shirt. The girls were taught a little more modesty.

These were isolated villages. The people lived in total ignorance of the rest of the world. Bro. Rosas remembered how he thought all the people were in that strange little box, a radio. He did not own a radio until 1975. Everyone in the village came to hear the battery operated radio. This isolation

allowed their culture to remain unchanged through the centuries. This proud people, once one of the most advanced cultures of the New World had been reduced to a wretched daily existence.

With their pride gone, they still lived a dreary existence. People who are never loved do not learn to love. They had a religion which did not embrace them as beloved children, but demanded their blind loyalty. It did not teach them of a loving God who sent His Son to die for them. Only the saving love of Jesus could break this centuries-old ignorance and replace it with pride and love.

Some things you will read in this book will seem cruel to you. I have, after much prayer, tried to present them as honestly as possible. They are not unusual, even today, among unbelievers in the Aztec culture. But these customs do not make the individual less worthy. The grace of God saves all who repent of sin. The Aztec believers are outstanding citizens because their lives are changed. They have received the love of God and can now love others.

I hope you enjoy the story of Bro. Francisco

Rosas. He is a gentle loving man. He tries to understand the abuse of his earthly father. He cares for his aging mother. He cares for his disabled brothers. He loves his wife and children. This is what Jesus does in a man's life.

Martha Johnson



1 Family Life

On June 22, 1931, when Francisco Rosas was born, life in Itzocatl, Hidalgo, had changed very little in four centuries. There were about fifty houses. Francisco's family lived in a one room house just as their ancestors had. The walls were made of

bamboo with mud packed in the cracks. The roof was made of palm leaves. The floor was hard packed earth. There was a door and one tiny window. Inside, it was usually dark. The kitchen was a fire built in one corner, and a few earthen dishes. Food was stored on the bamboo rafters or hung in bags from the rafters. The smoke from the fire dried and helped preserve the food. There was a small hole where the smoke escaped. The only furniture was a low table, a couple of chairs and the straw mat for sleeping.

Itzocatl was an isolated village. It was about a ten-to-twelve hour walk to a paved road. Some would say the people lived a deprived life. But deprivation is a state of mind. Everyone lived the same life. They knew no better life. They expected nothing more.

Their greatest ambition was for the earth to produce enough for them to live. Just as surely as God formed the first man from the earth, these people shaped their lives from the earth. From the mud they built their houses. From the earth they made their cooking utensils and dishes. In the earth they

grew their food. The dirt was even used to treat some skin ailments.

The area is semi-tropical, allowing almost year-round planting and abundant fruit. The crops were corn, black beans, sugar cane, and coffee. The corn and beans made their basic diet. Coffee was their most common drink. The sugar cane gave them sweets for the children, a crude unrefined sugar called piloncillo and agua ardiente (fermented liquor; burning or firewater). The political situation was socialist. The land allotment of each village was divided between the male heads of family. Each one farmed his "milpa" providing food for his family and trading the excess to buy other needed items.

One day's work was required each week from every man. These days were used to complete community projects: wells, schools, roads, etc. The village leader settled most disputes. The nearest real law enforcement was two hours away in Atlapexco. But seldom were they called. When called upon, the law enforcers often succeeded in hurting both the innocent and the guilty.

Thus, from one generation to the next life

continued virtually unchanged. No one realized in 1931, when Hilario and Mary Magdaline Vite had their first son, that this generation would see a change. That baby boy, Francisco, would be a leader who would make very significant changes.

Hilario and Mary were not a loving couple. In fact, they rarely talked to each other. Only necessary communication was spoken. Like many couples in their village, they lived in the same house, parented children, and worked together without ever really knowing each other.

When the time came to give birth, Mary advised the midwife. She gave birth on a straw mat on the floor. The umbilical cord was cut with a sharpened bamboo stick.

Perhaps because children so often died in infancy, they were seldom given names until they were baptized months later. Thus, the little "no name" was just a baby boy—another burden in the already busy day of his mother. To say that Mary did not love her children would be unfair. She was a product of her society. She worked hard and said little. She expected little more from life than a roof and

food. As for caring for her children, she did little more than prepare food. This was a very big job. Water had to be carried from the river. Corn had to be soaked in lye water overnight, washed and ground on the metate.



Dry beans had to be cooked. Chilies had to be ground in the molcajete. If her husband had workers, she would grind a half bushel of corn every day. This work was very hard, and left her with aching back and arms. No, it

wasn't that she didn't love her children. She just had no time and did not know how to express love. Sometimes her discipline was very hard, but her society was hard.

All her daily tasks were harder with the baby tied to her back with a rebozo (long shawl).



Her trip to the river was now harder, as she carried water on her head and the baby on her back. Her already tired body now had to

feed the baby. Grinding corn, making tortillas, washing—everything was harder. The baby would be breast fed until the next baby was coming and so on. Perhaps for this reason, she expressed little affection.

In the next twenty years, she gave birth to six more children: Teresa, Aurelio, Pascuala, Sinon, Tolis, and Florinda. Of these, four were retarded; two of these died in early adolescence.

Just as Francisco's mother expressed no love for Francisco, his father openly despised him. Some of his earliest memories were of hiding when his father came home. When he did not hide, he was yelled at and beaten. His mother often sent him to sleep at his grandparents' house to protect him. Only with his grandfather did he feel free from fear.



2

Early Childhood Memories

Francisco learned at a very young age that nobody was going to entertain him or worry if he were unhappy. He liked to help his mother. She worked so hard. She got up very early to grind corn. This was a tiring task of rolling a long round rock over a long flat rock (metate)

until the corn became a fine dough. This dough was then patted by hand into tortillas or "bocoles." Her "bocoles" were cookie-thick tortillas with beans and chili peppers in them. These could serve as a complete meal. She always made bocoles when his father had men working. They could easily be carried to the field. After grinding, Francisco's mother carried water from the river for drinking and washing. She also had to cut and carry firewood to use in cooking. To Francisco it seemed she never rested, and he liked to help her. He only wished she would talk to him while they worked. There was so much he wanted to talk about. All day he helped his mother, even though he was not yet five years old.

Late in afternoon, when he knew his father was coming, he hid. He did not understand why, but he realized his father hated him. Francisco was afraid of his father. Francisco always ate early and hid in a dark corner. If his father did not see him, he would not become angry. Many nights he fell asleep in his corner and slept there all night.

When Francisco was five, his mother gave

birth to a girl. What joy he felt to at last have a companion. As were all children in his village, he was expected to care for his younger siblings. Francisco was convinced that this baby girl, Teresa, would be his friend. While his mother worked, he carried Teresa to see the village and surrounding country side. When she was older, he patiently began to try to teach her to talk. Showing her a flower or tree, he repeated the word. In his young heart he did not understand, but he longed to talk with someone. Teresa only responded with guttural sounds as she never learned to say the words that Francisco repeated to her. But he loved her and spent hours, days, weeks and months caring for her. Even though she did not talk, she smiled and loved him back.

As time passed, his father's hostility toward him seemed to increase. Francisco never understood why his father hated him. Hilario was not an affectionate man. But only with his first born son was he openly hostile and cruel. More and more, as the attacks grew more violent, his mother sent him to his grandparents. When she saw the "bad spirit"

in her husband, she would sneak her small son out the door telling him to run to his grandparents.

The grandparents did not understand the actions of their son, for Francisco was a model child. Here in the warmth of his grandparents' love, Francisco developed the loving spirit that would characterize his entire life. In their home, he could eat at the table. He could sleep on the straw mat with them without fear. Best of all, his grandfather talked to him. How wise he seemed to Francisco. He could actually look at those strange markings on paper and see words. He did not have any books, but his grandfather "knew letters." How Francisco longed "to know letters."

With these two situations so extremely different, why did Francisco ever go home? Why didn't he just stay with his grandparents? He felt he had to help his mother. He loved her and his sister. They needed him. Again and again he returned. Each time he stayed until his mother, fearing for his life, sent him away. Each time he ran to the security of his grandfather. It was here that Francisco

received the nurturing his young spirit needed to prevent it from wilting. Between the old man and the young boy, a special bond began to grow.



3

A Day at the Milpa

At about the age of five, Francisco started to go to the milpa (field) with his grandfather. What wonderful days these were. The two would get up early and drink their hot coffee sweetened with peloncillo (raw sugar). Leaving the house just as day began to break,

they walked to the milpa. It was fun to walk with his grandfather. He would stop to greet the other men going to their milpas. He talked to Francisco. He told him the names of trees, animals, and birds. Francisco was really too young to help in the milpa. His grandfather started his work as Francisco sitting under the shade of a tree, watched his grandfather clear the land. Then he punched small holes in the ground. The seeds were dropped into the holes. Instinct told Francisco that one day he, too, would plant a milpa.

As the sun climbed higher, Francisco moved only to follow the shade. When his eyes grew heavy, he stretched out on the cool dirt and slept. All through the morning the old man worked in the scorching sun. Occasionally he came to see if the boy were all right. Sometimes he found him sleeping in the sun, or the fierce ants getting close. These times he gently moved the boy to a safer place. When the sun was very high, the old man would rest with the boy in the shade. They would drink water from a gourd and eat bocoles, waiting for the heat to calm some. Sometimes they slept. Sometimes they

talked. Francisco asked questions. He thought his grandfather was the smartest man in the world.

One day, when his grandfather returned to work, Francisco was bored. He was no longer sleepy. Now in the milpa next to his grandfather's, there was a very kind man. He had planted sugar cane in his milpa. Francisco eyed the stalks stretching higher than even his grandfather's head. He knew how deliciously sweet the juice tasted. He really wanted a cane to suck the sweet juice.

Francisco knew this neighbor as a kind man. He decided to ask him for a sugar cane. To his delight, the man not only gave him one, but he carefully chose the longest one, cutting it with one sharp chop with his machete. The cane was several times longer than Francisco was tall. Walking back to his shade he could only drag his prize. Now his only problem was to peel it. His grandfather would never let him use his razor sharp machete. But the cane had to be peeled before he could suck the sweet juice. When his grandfather saw his problem, he provided a broken half-sharp machete. It was just right.

Francisco was entertained all afternoon, carefully peeling sections of the sugar cane.

Shortly after this day, his grandfather told his son that he should plant some sugar cane for the boy. Much to Francisco's surprise, his father planted some. After that Francisco had sugar cane from his father's milpa.

Francisco went to the field many days with his grandfather, each day learning more about life. Always the best part of the day was the return. After working all day, his grandfather would cut a roll of firewood for his wife. Tying it together, he would carry it hanging from a "mecapal" which went across his forehead. The wood was carried on his back, but the weight was on his head. On top of the wood rode Francisco. What a wonderful way to "ride home."





4

Working with Father

In his own right, Francisco's father was not a poor man. He had his house and a "milpa" which provided food for his family with some left over. He was not a drinking man, so his money was not wasted. Very often he was able to pay men to help him in his "milpa".

When he was about eight years old, Francisco became big enough to help in his father's milpa. Rising early, he found his mother already working. Several men helped his father, and Mary had to prepare food for all of them. She ground the corn and chilies and then prepared the bocoles. This took most of the morning. Teresa, now four, helped by taking care of Aurelio.

Hilario Rosas was ready when the men arrived. They were dressed in the native white knee pants and shirts. They wore no shoes. Each carried a machete and wingaro (a hook-shaped farming tool). Francisco's father did not talk to him as his grandfather had. These days were very different.

When they arrived at the milpa, Hilario told each man where to work. There was no sleeping in the shade for Francisco now. Now he was bigger and was expected to work.

Later in the morning, his father called him. He wanted him to go tell his mother how many men there were. Neither Francisco nor Hilario could count the men. That was no problem. Hilario cut small sticks, one stick for each man. Francisco ran the sticks to his

mother. At home his mother, who could not count either, received the sticks. She prepared bocoles for each stick. They were then carried to the milpa to be eaten by the men.

Daring not to waste time, Francisco rushed back to the field. In the milpa again, he returned to work. As he worked, he became aware that his father had spoken to him. He did not understand. Paralyzed by fear, he hoped in vain that his father would just forget why he had called. Francisco continued his work. His father did not forget. Furious, he threw a large rock, just missing Francisco's head. Francisco, fearing for his life, did not move. He just waited for the next rock to hit him.

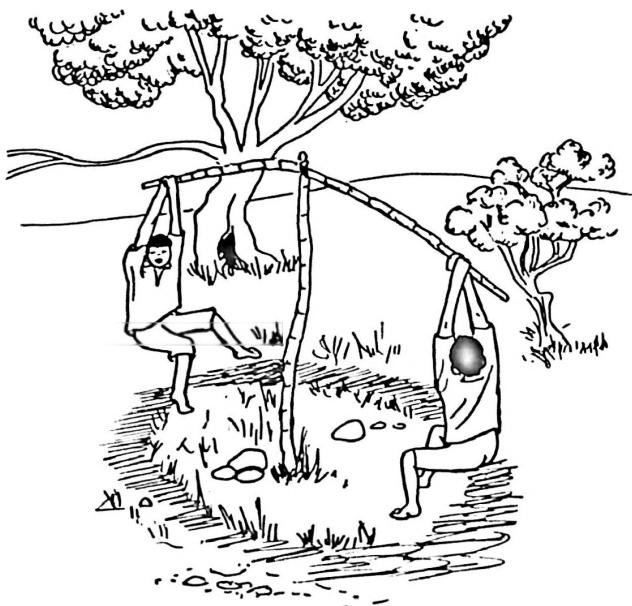
Then he heard the loud voices of the workers. They were scolding his father, telling him he could have killed the boy and gone to jail. In a subdued voice, Hilario sent the men back to work. Returning to his own work, he ignored Francisco. Dazed, Francisco also returned to work. Silently he wondered why his father hated him so much.



5 Before School

When Francisco was eight and Teresa was three, Aurelio was born. He was glad the baby was a boy. A boy would be more like him. Teresa had not learned to talk. She toddled around in silence, a contented child. She never learned even one word. Francisco wanted Aurelio to talk.

They had no toys, but children when given the opportunity, play. After their work was done, they invented games to play. One was to make a "tee" shaped swing.



Two bamboo rods were used. One was stuck in the ground. The other formed a crossed piece. On this crossed piece, two children could swing by their hands, just kicking the ground enough to propel the crossed piece around.

Francisco also liked to sing and beat on an old can for a drum. But some of his happiest hours were spent in one of two trees. One was a lime tree and the other a pomegranate. Both were enormous trees. When he was up in one of them, he was completely hidden from the world. There he dreamed. He wondered what his life would be like. And he dreamed of going to school. He wanted to know "letters" like his grandfather. These were Francisco's special place to dream. Sometimes he would carry his brother or Teresa to his tree, but usually he went alone to his private world.

All the children of the village were expected to work. Teresa was no different. At about the age of five she began to carry water from the river. Little girls were given a small clay water pot to learn the delicate art of balancing it on their heads. As they grew, they were given larger pots until they could carry a full-sized pot full of water. Each family hoped to have boys and girls. The boys helped their fathers, and the girls helped their mothers. At five, Teresa was now helping carry water. She would soon be washing clothes.

Francisco still helped Teresa care for Aurelio. Neither of them learned to talk as Francisco had hoped. But they were always glad to see him and that made him feel good. Maybe they were the lucky ones. They didn't seem to notice the things that troubled Francisco.

There were two things that Francisco wanted in life. One he knew was impossible. He wanted to go to school. His grandfather had taught him all the letters, but that wasn't enough. He wanted to learn about the world. He wanted to read books and to know numbers. There was so much he wanted to learn. The other thing he wanted was so simple. He wanted another shirt. He only had one. It didn't seem too much for his father to buy him one more. But he didn't. So day after day he wore the same shirt until it was just a rag. Then, and only then, did his father buy him another.

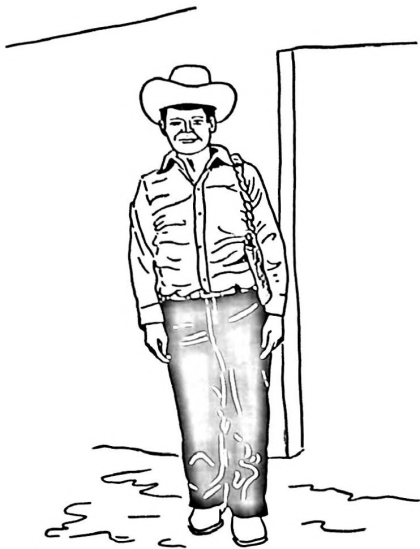


6

School

Francisco's grandfather encouraged him in his desire to go to school.

He promised to talk to his son. Francisco knew it was futile. His father would never give his permission. Francisco never knew



what his grandfather said. But when the day came, all that really mattered to him was that he was permitted to attend school. Surely God softened the heart of the father, knowing that one day He would use this young boy to preach the Gospel to his village.

His father made fun of him because he wanted to learn. "Do you want to be governor?" he asked him. Francisco did not want to be governor, but he wanted to know what was on the other side of the mountain.

He wanted to know about other places; where the sun came from; how the birds sang; why the river was so cold on a hot day... There were just so many things he felt he could learn at school.

Excitement grew in Francisco's heart as the first day of school approached. As much as he wanted to go to school, he feared this unknown place. Since all the men in his village wore the white knee pants, children were told that if they acted badly a bad man with pants on would come and take them away. Francisco did not quite understand what pants were until he saw the teacher. Those had to be pants. How uncomfortable and hot they looked. They reached all the way to the top of his shoes. This teacher must be the bad man who carried children away. Fear filled him, but the security of his grandfather's hand steadied him. He knew his grandfather would not lead him wrong. He was ten years old when he entered school.

The Mexican government had long realized that the best way to improve village life was to educate the children. So teachers were sent into the larger villages to establish schools.

Some of these teachers preferred to work in the city. Thus, they went to villages only because they were sent there and taught little. But many were good, dedicated teachers who truly wanted to help the children. Tao Maturbe Martinez was one of the dedicated teachers. Living in Huejutla, he walked five hours to Itzocatl and stayed from Monday to Friday. He lived in the school and ate with the families of his students.

Maestro (teacher) Tao soon recognized Francisco to be different. He was intelligent enough, but the greatest difference was his tremendous desire to learn. When Francisco finished the three recognized years of school in Itzocatl, Maestro Tao brought the books of his own children to teach him fourth and fifth grades.

Maestro Tao ran a no-nonsense school, since he had about sixty children in three different grades. Children were expected to sit up straight and respect the teacher. Discipline was stern. Offenders were made to squat in the sun with arms outstretched and a heavy rock in each hand. Their arms soon ached but to lower them would mean a sure

beating. This discipline encouraged good behavior. Francisco was never punished in this way. He adored Maestro Tao and could never disobey him. He completed to the letter everything the teacher asked of him. Often after school he would stay to help the teacher clean up and the two talked.

Maestro Tao told him about Huejutla, a place where more than 2000 people lived. And beyond Huejutla he told him of a school that trained teachers. He encouraged Francisco to prepare to attend that school. Francisco needed little encouragement, for he felt that to be a teacher would be the most wonderful thing in the world. Maestro Tao assured him that he would help him enter that school.

At recess the children ate bocoles sent from home. They played basketball or just ran and played.

After five years of school, Francisco shared his dream to be a teacher with his grandfather. His grandfather encouraged him to talk to his mother, which he did. She agreed to talk to his father, and told Francisco that his father had some money saved in a

secret place. It would be enough to send him to school.

Francisco did not know exactly what happened after that. His father became very angry. He took all the money out of the secret place and spent it on new tools. Then he refused to talk further about sending his son to teacher's school. Obviously they didn't have the money for such things.

Francisco was crushed. Of all the cruel things his father had done, this was the worst. He ran to his secret place high in the tree. There, high on a branch, he cried out his anguish, his disappointment at life itself. Learning letters had not satisfied his hunger to learn. It had made it greater. Now this man who had abused him so often had committed the ultimate offense. He had smashed his dream to pieces.

Later, when Francisco came down, he had settled his anger. He was resigned to life. He was not even angry with his father.



7

Brothers and Sisters

It was Aztec custom that the older children cared for the younger, thus allowing the mother to work. The mother carried the child on her back until she weaned it. This was usually at two or three years, but sometimes later. As the birth of another baby approached, the older brother or sister cared

for the next in line. Francisco did not mind caring for his siblings. He carried them on his back and tried to teach them. Teresa was his first sister. Even his patient instruction never taught her to talk. She did learn to work. When she was five she was given a small clay pot and taught to go to the river to bring water. Once when she fell and broke the pot, she was severely beaten. After that she was more careful. She didn't seem to understand most things, but she understood that she must work.

Aurelio was Francisco's first brother. With high hopes, Francisco again cared for a baby. He tried to teach him to talk. Aurelio understood less than Teresa. He did not learn to do his share of the work as Teresa had. At about three, Aurelio found a way to spend his time. He sat for hours by an ant bed and made little corrals for the ants, placing them in the corrals and watching them. Francisco called this "taking care of the ants." He didn't even seem to notice if the ants stung him. Francisco loved Teresa and Aurelio, but they were not the companions for whom he longed.

Shortly after Francisco started to school, Pascuala was born. When Sinon was born, Francisco started caring for Pascuala. Teresa helped their mother, and Aurelio cared for the ants. Francisco knew from the beginning that Pascuala was different. She repeated the words he said to her and was soon talking. Now he had school books he could show her also. Finally he had a sister who talked to him, and he loved her dearly. The last two children were girls: Tolis, who was also retarded, and Florinda. By the time Tolis was born, Sinon was helping Aurelio with the ants, and Pascuala was carrying water.

Pascuala was always a spirited child, which made Francisco love her more. She didn't just accept life. She questioned it and wanted to know why things were the way they were. In Aztec culture, children were not supposed to question, just accept. Pascuala would soon learn that.

One day preparing for workers, Maria told Pascuala to go to the river for water. Pascuala, having other things on her mind, told her mother she did not want to go. For the first time, Maria had her authority as

a parent challenged. Francisco had always been an obedient child. Teresa always did what she was told. Poor Aurelio was always with the ants. But their little Pascuala, at five years old, didn't want to carry water. Well, she would just show her who was boss. Taking Teresa in one hand and a rope in the other, Maria began to scream that she would soon want to carry water. Francisco knew what the punishment would be, and he wanted to protect his beloved Pascuala. But he dared not. Not moving from his corner he watched in horror as his mother threw the rope over the rafters of the house. She then tied one end around the girl's neck. Pulling the other end she lifted the child off the floor. Then she beat her with the loose end of the rope.

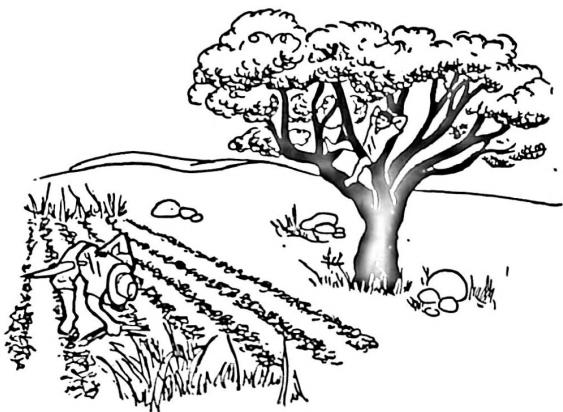
This was a common punishment in their village. The child was beaten until she repented and begged forgiveness or fainted. Pascuala fainted. When she fainted, Maria left her hanging. Francisco lowered her limp body.

Holding her he thought about this child who talked to him. He hoped she would live. She was semi-conscious for about thirty

minutes, after which she began to talk. It was never again necessary to discipline her. But all her life, she hated her mother.

A few years later, Teresa and Tolis took fever and became very sick. There were no doctors. They did not know what caused the fever. Both girls died after a few days. No services were held. They were just put in simple wooden boxes and buried. Francisco felt sad but, in his accepting way, thought it was best, as they would never have been able to care for themselves.

Francisco, Aurelio, Pascuala, Sinon, and Florinda lived to be adults. Aurelio and Sinon, in their retarded state, lived in the woods, often going without clothes. Pascuala and Florinda married and had families.



8

Death of Grandfather

These isolated villages were ripe for many political theories. Even though they seemed insignificant politically, they were often involved in battles for control. Their isolation often allowed these battles to be violent and bloody without consequence.

Francisco's grandfather was an influential man. He was intelligent and well respected. Often the village followed his leadership when problems arose. This made him an important target for political groups.

In 1941, the village of Itzocatl was divided into two political factions. Each was struggling for control of the village. Francisco's grandfather easily influenced people with his intelligent, easy-going manner.

One fall day, Hilario sent Francisco to watch his grandfather work in his milpa. Although he sensed danger, Francisco did not fully understand the situation. Arriving at the milpa, his grandfather started to work. Francisco didn't really help that day. He climbed a tree. There, hidden by the leaves, he watched his grandfather work. By afternoon Francisco had grown restless. Francisco did not know why his grandfather told him to go home. Completely trusting his grandfather, Francisco ran home. Perhaps his grandfather had sensed the boy's restlessness and felt there was no danger. But more likely, he knew the danger and did not want the boy

involved or hurt. Whatever the reason, Francisco did not see his beloved grandfather alive again.

Most of the village heard the gun shots. When Francisco heard them, fear gripped him. He ran with the men of the village to find his grandfather. He felt such grief that he could not express. Surely this was the worst possible thing that could happen. Later he felt even worse when his father blamed him for abandoning his grandfather. Hilario wanted to kill him, but Francisco was only a child obeying his grandfather.

There were many rumors that the local authorities knew who killed his grandfather. Rumors were that he was killed because so many people followed his advice, but as often happened in these isolated villages, the matter was never solved. Francisco never knew who did it or why his grandfather was killed. He just accepted it as he did everything else.

Francisco had loved his grandfather. He had been a kind and gentle man. His influence molded Francisco into the man he became. Like his grandfather, Francisco

became a kind and gentle man, much sought after as a leader in his village.



9 Marriage

Aztec culture did not permit casual dating among the young. A marriage contract was made between the parents. The boy's parents chose a girl who was in good health and strong enough to work. The contract was then made. This contract was considered binding,

and to break it was betrayal. The boy's family gave gifts to the girl's family. These were usually agua ardiente (cane liquor), sweet bread, ground coffee, and peloncillo (unrefined hard sugar).

When Francisco was still in school, he met a girl. They often talked at recess. After the death of his grandfather, Francisco longed to talk to someone more than ever. Now he could talk to this girl. She also liked books and hoped to continue studying. In a village where girls didn't normally study, this girl defied custom. Here girls were judged by how fine they could grind corn and how good their tortillas were. This girl actually wanted to do more than grind corn.

When Francisco left school he no longer saw his friend, but he thought about her, and wanted to talk to her.

He began to formulate a plan. He would work hard to make a crop. He would save all the money that he could. He would build a house. He would marry his friend. He even found a time to ask her if she would marry him. She said "Yes," if their fathers agreed and made the contract.

As he made his plans for the future, he knew what he had to do. He had to ask his father for enough money to plant a crop the first year. As a young man, he was entitled to a little plot of land to farm but he needed tools and money to start farming. His grandfather would have helped him. His only inheritance from his grandfather was his gentle spirit and intelligent mind. These would someday make him a leader, but now they would not buy tools and seeds.

He dreaded talking to his father. When the day came, Francisco was surprised when his father gave him the money. He did not help him in the field, but Francisco's friends did. Hilario was jealous of his many friends.

This is how Francisco settled into the life of an average villager. His dreams of leaving, of studying, of being different, were planted alongside the kernels of corn. The corn would give fruit, but his dreams would lie dormant many years.

He worked very hard the next three years. Even so, he was not able to save the money to build a house. An Aztec male at 18 years was already considered a man ready for marriage.

As he quietly thought of his friend, his parents also began to think of his marriage. They looked for a strong healthy girl who knew how to work and was not lazy. The girls' parents basically wanted the same, a man who would work and provide for their daughter and her children. Francisco longed for a companion with whom he could talk and share.

The day Hilario talked to Francisco, the decision had already been made. He tried to reason with his father, asking to consider his friend. Hilario would listen to none of it. The contract would be made with the parents of the girl he had chosen.

The two fathers talked first. To them it seemed a good match. Hilario gave the girl's father a liter of agua ardiente to seal the deal, but the girl's mother did not agree. Two weeks later Hilario sent bread and ground coffee as gifts to her parents. They returned them, indicating their rejection of the contract. Again the men talked. More gifts were sent. This time they were received.

During all of this talking, Francisco did not see his future wife. When the contract was

made, the date was set. The wedding would be a civil ceremony in Atlapexco.

On the wedding day, little crowns of paper were made. This was the first time Francisco saw Benita. The little procession of bride, groom, parents and a few friends walked for two hours to Atlapexco where the ceremony took place. They walked back to Itzocatl where a dinner was served. The local band played. Everyone seemed happy.

When it was over, Francisco found his greatest fear confirmed. Benita did not talk to him. She was a good woman. She would work with and for him. She would give him children, but she did not talk to him.

Aztec custom was that the boy's father would help his son and wife get established. They sometimes lived with the parents, or the father helped them build a home.

Hilario did not want to help Francisco and Benita. He did, however, agree to let them live in his pig pen. This was a tiny mud house that smelled of its former occupants. Francisco and Benita cleaned it up and made it their home. Here they lived several years

until Francisco was able to build another house.

God blessed their home with children: nine boys and one girl. Of the nine sons, five died. Lajaro took fever at three months. Without adequate medical care, he soon died. The other four died within a week of birth. There were no doctors in Itzocatl. The only help a woman had to give birth was the local midwife. The custom was to cut the umbilical cord with a sharpened bamboo stick. This practice very often infected the child with tetnus. Death was sure within a few days. The death of children was so common that parents just accepted it as a part of life.

The five surviving children were Rufino, Ofelia, Herman, Javier, and Mario. Bro. Francisco Rosas helped each of his children to build his house and get started. He said he wanted to be a better father than his father had been.

Married life for Francisco and Benita was just like that of all the neighbors. He worked in the field to grow enough beans and corn for them to eat and to trade for necessities. She worked in the house to provide for her

husband and children. Neither of them thought about another life. Neither knew that something very different awaited them.

Benita was a good wife. She did excellent embroidery and made her colorful blouses with delicate stitches. She kept her house, husband and children. She did not complain.

Francisco also worked hard. Some of his friends helped him the first year to get started, and Benita helped.

One year Benita suggested he plant chili peppers. The normal crops were corn, beans, sugar cane, and coffee. These were crops that could be stored all year for the family's use. Chili peppers could not be stored, but they could be sold to buy needed tools and supplies.

As Benita had suggested, he planted chili peppers. He made a very good crop and sold enough to save some money. So, the relationship between them grew better as they worked together for their common good.

Francisco's relationship with his father did not improve. At times it was worse. Francisco meticulously planted and harvested. He took pride in caring for his growing family. One

year he especially anticipated a good crop. His corn had grown well. The rains had come. Now he awaited the ripe ears of corn. Here and there, he heard rumors of a plague of worms that ate everything in their path. Seeing his corn so pretty he did not believe anything could destroy it, but something did. The path of the worms took his whole field. Unbelieving, he watched the army of worms devour his corn.

Returning to his home, he needed encouragement. Instead, his father's scorn wounded him deeply. Hilario laughed at him. At twenty-four years of age, he got drunk for the first time. Faithfully Benita carried him home and put him to bed. All the while she told him his father would beat him. The next day his father did not beat him, but they did fight. Although drinking alcohol never became a real problem for him, he drank for about three years. Then, as suddenly as he had started drinking, he quit drinking.



10 Salvation

That July day began as any other. Francisco was up early to drink coffee. He had worked a few hours and was back at home to eat breakfast. The usual breakfast was eggs, black beans, and those delicious hand-made tortillas. He ate in silence as Benita continued to put out more tortillas. Later the children

would eat. He knew there were some strangers in the village, but he wasn't really interested. Then one of his sons ran in with some papers. Those papers were Gospel tracts that would begin the change in his life.

It sounded strange to hear his son talk of sins and repenting. He listened as his son explained what he had heard. The men in the village were from Hueyatl. They had come to preach the Word of God, saying that all needed to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus as Savior.

Taking the papers, he sent his son on his way. Without much thought he read, "All men are sinners, God loves us and wants to save us." What a message the paper had! The Spirit of God began speaking to him that day; but he was a cautious man not given to quick decisions. He put the papers away to be considered later.

That night he did go to hear the men speak. They spoke of a new religion, of breaking with tradition to become a believer in Jesus as Savior. That would be a difficult decision. He liked the message and wanted to accept,

but he did not. One of his neighbors, Cervantes, did.

This was a slow time for him in his milpa. For some time he had planned to leave Itzocatl to work a few days. The extra money was needed. So, he left to work for two weeks. When he returned home, he attended another Bible study. Now Rafael and Nicolas had accepted Christ. Still, Francisco resisted, although the message appealed to him. The third time he attended, he made his decision. It was not easy to be one of the first believers. Tradition did not release its hold on them easily. Their own neighbors and families often rejected them. That did not matter. Bro. Rosas had Jesus, and he had the other believers as brothers and sisters.

There were only a few believers at first and the opposition was very strong. Bro. Rosas, as he was now called, met his first test around All Saints Day. This fiesta was celebrated on October 31, November 1, and November 2. Tradition said that the dead spirits came back on these days. When they came back, they must be attended.



In each house there was an altar for the dead spirits. Food and drink were prepared and offered to them. The altar was a table with an arch formed over it and canes tied at the top. The arch was then covered with marigolds (flower of the dead). Then fruit (usually bananas and tangerines) was hung with strings. Idols, or pictures of the dead family members, were hung in the arch. The traditional food was tamales wrapped in banana leaves. Hot chocolate was served with the tamales. The family members called their dead by setting off firecrackers. The food and

drink were then left on the altar for the spirits to consume. Giving up these traditions was a tremendous trial for these new believers. Bro. Rosas did not resist the temptation that first year. As they had every other year, he and Benita put up their altar and made their offering to the dead. That night with the tamales and chocolate setting on the altar, Bro. Rosas heard the believers singing, "Only in Christ, Only in Him." *Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby you must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Bro. Rosas felt so ashamed that night, He came to the realization that he must live for Jesus. He could not live with his guilt if he did not. From that time forward, he was found faithful.



11

Problems at Home

Benita had not been saved. She did not want to leave the traditions and religion of her parents and grandparents. She was not ready to face the scorn of her neighbors and friends.

Bro. Rosas continued to attend the nightly studies in the home of Bro. Nicolas. All the new believers wanted to learn more and more. They sang choruses, read the Bible, and discussed what they read. As Bro. Rosas was a natural leader, he often led in these studies.

Benita's resistance continued until one night, she locked him out of the house. She told him he could not share their home because he had left their common religion. Bro. Rosas felt sad for her because she didn't understand. He prayed for her, that she would see that this new way was better. He was a faithful husband and father. For three years he slept outside his own house, protected only by the overhang of the roof. For three years, he prayed for Benita's salvation.

One night as he prayed, he heard Benita scream out for help. As he ran for the door she opened it begging him to help her. "It is squeezing me, please get it off," she pleaded. "Benita, there is nothing. It is just the devil scaring you. Believe in Jesus and He will care for you," he told his wife. "Yes, yes, I believe," she said. That night, for the first time in three years, he slept in his house.

There were more believers now. Bro. Nicolas' house was too small for them to continue to meet there. They had already talked to Bro. Rosas about moving the studies to his house. Now that Benita had been saved, the change was made



12 Changes

The group had grown. Bro. Rosas pastored these people as the Spirit of God led. They didn't really know how to do everything, but they found power in the Word of God.

Bro. Gene McCann visited in those early days. He encouraged the believers. In 1971, Bro. Rosas and Benita were baptized. What had seemed impossible, God had accomplished.

Itzocatl was a two-hour climb from the road. It could only be reached by foot or on

horseback. For this reason, it was always a very special occasion when the brothers came. Bro. McCann brought Bibles and hymn books. When he came, Benita would kill a chicken and prepare a big meal with a lot of her tortillas. Later they all would study the Bible.

It was not long before Bro. Rosas knew that his house was not big enough. Often, people lined the walls and stood at the windows to hear the Word of God. They all agreed they needed to build a place to worship; but how could they, when they were so poor!

Bro. Rosas thought of a plan. The men of the church would plant a crop together. From their earnings, they could start the church building. That is what they did. They planted and cared for their crop. God blessed their hard work and the crop was sold. That was just the beginning. They learned of the tithe. They did not have riches, but they did have corn, beans, coffee, pilon (raw sugar), chilies, etc. The women brought eggs or perhaps a chicken to sell. The money earned from the sale of their contributions was used to buy the necessary materials.

The believers labored together to erect the bamboo frame. Then the mud was packed around the frame. As they had freely given their tithe, the believers gave their time in this labor of love.

When the walls were in place, they wanted to put on a tin roof, but their money was all gone. They would not have more until another crop could be made. This time, Bro. McCann managed to help them by paying for the tin. The 3' x 10' sheets of tin had to be carried up the mountain. The brothers gladly volunteered to carry the sheets of tin on their backs. When the building was finished, they carried split logs to use for benches. How proud they were of this meeting place. It was a simple structure that spoke of their love for God.

In January 1973, the mission in Itzocatl was organized into La Iglesia Bautista Belen (Bethlehem Baptist Church). Bro. Rosas was named pastor. He loved the believers, and he loved to win new people. The mission became a reality because of the great love demonstrated by the believers.



13 Bible School

With this group of people to lead, Bro. Rosas realized his dream of teaching. Instead of teaching from text books as he had once hoped, he taught from the Word of God.

Bro. Rosas wanted to know more about the Bible. There were schools where the Bible

was taught, but with a family to support, Bro. Rosas could not attend the schools.

In 1971, Bro. Buddy Johnson visited Itzacatl with Bro. McCann. God spoke to this young pastor and called him to help train men to teach the Bible. At the time he was pastoring a church in Texas but God called Bro. Johnson to teach because He never fails to meet the needs of His people.

In October 1975, Bro. Catarino Morales brought the news. Regular Bible classes would be held in Atlatipa every Thursday and Friday. Bro. Rosas and others could walk to Atlatipa to study. Bro. Catarino and Bro. Johnson taught the classes.

Bro. Rosas was one of the seven men to start studying. Joyfully he walked the hour and one-half Thursday morning. As they studied the Bible, new insights were realized. The students understood more and more. Two senior students from the Mexican Bible Institute also taught the students. They were Brethren Everaldo Osuna and Antonio Santos.

The program was a study/work program. All morning on Thursday the students studied

the Bible. At lunch the ladies in Atlatipa served beans and tortillas. That afternoon, the students divided into teams to visit the different churches or missions. These missions were Atlatipa, Itzocatl, Coyolapa, Cochiscautitla and Mecatlan. The students usually slept in the meeting place after services. This was a growing time for Bro. Rosas. Working side by side with these more experienced men, he learned valuable lessons.

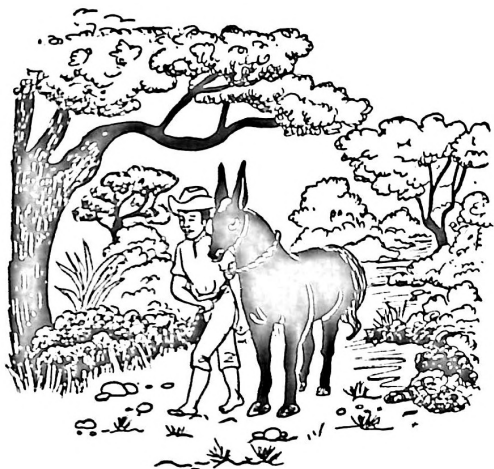
On Friday mornings, the students took time off to go to market day in Atlapexco. They walked into town to buy whatever their families needed for the week, or to sell their own produce. In the afternoon, they resumed their studies. On Friday nights, they visited other missions, again sleeping in the meeting place. Four of the original seven students finished the first year of studies.

In 1976-77 Bro. Mike Holcombe helped teach the Bible classes. That year, thirteen men enrolled. The fellowship was so sweet as these new workers worked with, and learned from, the Missionary. That year Bro. Pablo

Chavez started studying. Together the men opened three new missions that year.

To open a mission in a new village required courage and faithfulness. The villages were often one-to-two hours walk from the road. When the worker entered a village, he visited and witnessed until he found a man who would listen. When someone in the village opened his home, Bible studies would begin. There were often threats and persecution. But the workers found strength in each other. In class they shared blessings and burdens. Then they worked together.

During this time, Bro. Rosas watched the congregation in Itzocatl grow to over three hundred. They had services five nights a week, as there was a tremendous hunger for spiritual food. Bro. Rosas studied and taught the Bible, but God gave the increase.



14 Influence for Good

In small isolated villages such as Itzocatl, there were usually two or three men who guided the people. One was the judge named by the people. One was the unnamed tribal leader who gained his leadership through his wise decisions. Another was the government-appointed teacher in the village. Bro. Rosas

had already gained the respect of the people before he became pastor of the church. But now he led them in the spiritual aspects of life as well as the physical, making his influence even greater. The teacher at this time was an ungodly man who was jealous of the respect the people had for Bro. Rosas.

As more people accepted Christ and lived for Him, they taught their children another way to live. These children also lived for Christ and would not participate in the ungodly activities as they had previously. Because of this, the teacher decided to take action. Using false signatures, he filed complaints with the government accusing Bro. Rosas of not permitting the children to participate in school activities (dances), of teaching classes outside the school which went against the official textbooks, and of being, and teaching others to be, gorilla warriors. All of these charges were false. As they were serious charges, the government sent a company of twelve soldiers to investigate.

When the soldiers arrived, they found Bro. Rosas on the road taking his mule to pasture.

They surrounded him and pointed their guns at him. As he was considered a gorilla warrior, the soldiers took no chances that he would escape. However, as they asked him questions, and he answered, they realized he was not dangerous and lowered their guns.

The captain asked the questions. Bro. Rosas answered truthfully and simply. "You are Francisco Rosas Vite?"

"Yes, I am."

"Sr. Rosas, you have been accused of teaching others to participate in gorilla warfare against the government of Mexico, of having political meetings teaching against the approved government textbooks and of not letting the children participate in school programs. What do you have to say?"

"I am not guilty of any of those things."

"We want to see the other men who attend your political meetings and your son."

"There are no political meetings. I just meet with my brothers to study the Bible."

"Your brothers?"

"Yes, my brothers. We are all of the same family, Sons of God."

"You are evangelical?"

"Yes."

"Do you intend to continue being evangelical?"

"Yes! Even if you kill me, there is no other way for me."

"Then we will have to arrest you."

"If you must—but I will take my Bible with me."

"We don't want to scare you, but the charges made against you are very serious, and we will have to arrest you."

"Why should I be scared if God is with me. Arrest me if you must, but you cannot take my faith from me."

"You can take your animal home, but do not try to run or escape. We will also want to see the other men involved."

"Why would I run? This is where my home is. I have a coffee field, sugar cane, a cane mill, animals and my family. Where would I run?"

"Do you really have all those things?"

"Yes. Come to my house and we can talk. I only ask that you not scare my son, because he is sick."

Agreeing, the soldiers went to his home.

Later he also invited them to see the church. As they soon determined that Bro. Rosas was a gentle, honest man, the soldiers decided to hold a village meeting at the school to decide if he should be arrested.

At the meeting, the authorities expressed their surprise at the charges and refused to turn Bro. Rosas over to the soldiers. Declaring the signatures forgeries, they called the teacher to explain.

Bro. Catarino Morales had also been called to help defend Bro. Rosas. Bro. Catarino was better educated and he knew better how to handle such matters. He presented these questions. If Bro. Rosas were teaching against the government, who were his students? Why weren't they brought to accuse Bro. Rosas? Where did Bro. Rosas teach them? Who were his collaborators?

Faced with the obvious innocence of Bro. Rosas and also the angry villagers, the teacher admitted to forging the signatures of the authorities and of falsely accusing Bro. Rosas.

The captain gave his judgment. All the charges were false. Bro. Rosas taught only the

Bible in the meetings, and the Mexican Constitution gave him that right. Facing Bro. Rosas he added, "What you find in the Bible, you can teach; but do not get involved in political and educational matters."

Bro. Rosas told him, "We only teach the Word of God. We teach our people to live according to what God teaches. We are not political, but we will teach our children to live as God tells us in the Bible."

"Then you may continue your meetings as usual," the soldier continued.

Later when all the people had gone, the captain identified himself as a believer saying, "Do not be afraid to worship as you please. The laws protect you."

A few months later, the government-appointed teacher was forced to leave Itzocatl because of moral problems in the school. Bro. Rosas remained true to God and to His Word in the face of danger.



15

New Understanding

Spanish is the official language of Mexico. It is taught in all the schools. In Itzocatl everyone who had gone to school could speak Spanish, but their first language was Nahuatl. They learned this language from their parents and understood it better.

Many parents did not send their children to

school. They especially did not think girls needed to study. After all, women did not need to read and write to make good tortillas. For this reason, many women could not read. Benita Rosas was one of them.

At this time the Bible was available in Spanish only. The hymns were also in Spanish. In the church services the hymns were sung in Spanish, and the Scripture was read in Spanish. Then Bro. Rosas explained in Nahuatl. This meant that two-thirds of the worship service was spoken in a language they did not understand well. But the people were saved.

They would not experience the joy of hearing the Word of God in their language. This was their situation for more than ten years. Then Bro. Rosas was invited by Wycliff Bible Translators to help in translations. After one conference he returned to Itzocatl with many hymns in Nahuatl. Now the people could lift their voices in song in their native tongue.

When the New Testament was finished, the church in Itzocatl was chosen for the dedication. A huge "fiesta" was planned with special music, messages, and tamales for all. Now the people could also hear the Word of God spoken in their native tongue.

For many years Bro. Rosas had wanted Benita to be more active in the ministry. Since the night of her salvation, she had not again opposed his serving God, but neither was she actively involved. She could not read in Spanish or Nahuatl. Bro. Rosas started to read to her from the New Testament. Now at last she could understand the Word, and understanding, she began to talk to Bro. Rosas.



Other Blessings

Bro. Rosas loved his aging father and mother. His sisters would not care for them, so he did. In spite of the abuse in his childhood, he let the love of God show through his life to his parents. They did not accept the Gospel as he had. Bro. Rosas prayed for them and witnessed to them. Then

as his father lay dying, Bro. Rosas told him of the love of God one last time. This time, his father did accept and was saved. Now a new believer, he asked Bro. Rosas to forgive him for all the things he had done to him. With a prayer of thanksgiving, Bro. Rosas forgave his father. Later his mother was also saved.

Bro. Rosas never really knew why his father abused him. Perhaps more than anything else, it was simply the culture of the village. Life was hard and there didn't seem to be any time for affection. How the Gospel changed Itzocatl by teaching the people to love others as God loved them!

As Bro. Rosas and Benita's children matured they made plans to help them build houses. Often borrowing money and working with his own hands, he saw each of his children in a new house. None of his children had to live in a pig pen as he had with his bride.

Today Bro. Rosas continues as pastor of the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Itzocatl. But he is more than a pastor. He is a highly respected and sought-after community leader. Believers and unbelievers alike, know his judgment to

be honest and just. This still causes him problems with the power-hungry and wicked men who want to control the people. But Bro. Rosas knows that just as God has protected him in the past, He will protect him in the future.