"UNTTO THE LEAST OF THESE"

Chapter One

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"UNTO THE LEAST OF THESE"

WHAT IS A RESCUE MISSION'?

A RESCUE MISSION is an organization (usually chartered as an Eleemosynary Corporation) set up by men and women who love The Lord Jesus Christ and concerned about the socially disadvantaged, the unemployed, detached, rejected, isolated and deeply troubled people of all ages, races, creed and situation.

With compassion and understanding, these Born Again Believers present the Grace of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ with highly skilled and specialized methods. These include, first of all, THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD CHRIST without apology. Next is the material service-food, shelter, clothing medical service of all kinds. Counseling of the highest quality helps develop new attitudes toward God and others. Every type of ministry is utilized to reach "THE LEAST, THE LAST, THE LOST" with a message of hope through the LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.

Thus the personal effectiveness of Christ, Savior and Lord, takes hold of lives with the result that men and women, boys and girls are BORN AGAIN into newness of Life and start along the road which leads to a life of peace and joy.

THE PROBLEM

The problem of dealing with the poor, crippled, aged, handicapped and unfortunate is as old as civilization itself. In Old Testament days we find laid out very clearly instructions for aiding this group of people. In Deuteronomy 14:28-29, God gave commandment to the Children of Israel "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year and shall lay it up within thy gates

... and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow which are within thy gates shall come and shall eat and shall be satisfied: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest". In the next chapter, 15:7, "If there be among you a poor man of any of thy brethren within any of the gates of thy land which the Lord thy God hath given thee thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him". Verses 10 and 11, "Thou shalt surely give Him and thine heart shall not be grieved
when thou givest unto Him . . . for the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee saying thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy, in thy land”.

It is evident from these Scriptures the problem of the needy and poor is an old one. It is equally clear that those who are Christians have very specific responsibilities in this area. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “The poor ye have always with you” (Jn. 12:8). The word POOR is found in over 200 places in the Bible. In the majority of references God commands that the “POOR” shall be cared for by those who have anything to share.

The purpose of this book is to show the methods of dealing with this problem, effectively, efficiently and with compassion. This is the greatest need-to carry out the injunction of The Word of God to care for these the least, the last, the lost, with love-love that comes through lives that are truly dedicated to The Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, Love is action with true compassion.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In ancient times were groups of those who today are loosely referred to as Migrants and Vagrants. These were primarily runaway slaves who endeavored to lose their identity in the big cities-even as thousands crowd into slums today. The city of Rome attracted these in great numbers. In addition minstrels, roving monks and others wandered around the then known world, seeking some kind of personal satisfaction, earning a precarious living entertaining or performing menial tasks along the way. Even today, travelers to the Orient are accosted by beggars, fakirs, so-called "holy men" begging alms of the passer by.

Outside of the Children of Israel, most nations took little or no interest in these poor and unfortunate, accepting their plight as a way of life. In the time of Jesus, even the Jews, on the whole, paid scant attention to these as witnessed by the scenes at the Pool of Bethesda, treatment of lepers, beggars who sat at the gate of the Temple. The story of the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16 depicts the agony and helplessness of the needy, "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate (of the wealthy man) full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores."

Later on we find that in Europe many of the monasteries opened their doors to these wanderers, giving food, shelter and other services.

In England the problems of poverty became so acute in the 1600's
that eighty thousand persons were classified "vagrants." In 1603 King James lst, by proclamation, ordered that vagrants be deported from the country. Shortly afterwards buildings known as workhouses were established to care for the indigent, handicapped, aged and crippled. According to all reports conditions in these places were so bad as to be indescribable.

THE PROBLEM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Prior to the founding of the oldest Rescue Mission now in operation by Jerry McAuley in 1872, the problem was growing rapidly. Following the Civil War, a great movement of men across the country began. This is true in all post-war periods. Men grow restless in military service. Many are uprooted from their homes at the formative age. Upon release from the strict discipline of military life, a sense of freedom is felt; there is a desire to see the world on their own; thus movement here and there becomes a pattern of life.

Soon after 1865 the railroads, sensing future growth in the West, started expanding trackage. This called for many laborers-men who were to form the nucleus of the TRANSIENT SEASONAL LABOR MOVEMENT. The era of large farms opened; road construction took on the proportions of a major industry and the needs for these transient workers increased to fantastic requirements. With the lumber industry and harvesting of ice gaining volume, the number of this mighty army grew until reaching a peak in 1926 of approximately three and a half million.

The majority were homeless—that is, had no permanent residence; were of limited education; many from poor family backgrounds. Of course, as always, there were notable exceptions. In addition to this group, the drunkard was a tremendous problem. All these were prime subjects for the services of the Rescue Mission, established in the very beginning to serve the least of these.

Suddenly the picture changed dramatically! About 1926, the introduction of modern machinery—the beginning of what we now call automation, seriously affected the Transient Worker. Use of the combine eliminated thousands of farm jobs; new techniques in road building did likewise; mechanical refrigeration almost eliminated completely the ice harvest, and the logging industry changed speedily. At that time about
all that was left in any volume was the railroad work-laying tracks, maintenance, and in bad weather, the clearing of the tracks.

Then came the GREAT DEPRESSION, 1929-1933. New and complex problems were created for the Missions. Entire families became transients. Some were forced to seek material help for the first time. Young people left home in great numbers seeking work in every area of our land. Children, ashamed to attend church in rags, became the problem of the Missions. Thus from a work with transient, homeless men, the Rescue Missions developed programs reaching all ages, all types, any who fell into the category of The Least, The Last, The Lost.

At this time a new factor arose which had great bearing on the development of new facets of service for the Rescue Mission. Many churches, following their constituency to the suburbs, moved out of what is now "The Inner City." This was necessary in order to maintain the congregation. However, such action created a great void. As one class moved out another came in—usually the aged, unemployable, minority groups—all needing the Gospel. But the church was gone! There are exceptions of course. Some churches did not leave the inner city and these have done noble things for Christ in programs which included along with The Gospel, relief, counseling, recreation and the like. But in the main, it was The Rescue Mission which stepped in and filled the gap.

By the nineteen seventies another change was in progress. America was "computerized." A person without a high school diploma was almost unemployable. Millions of men and women left the rural areas to seek jobs in the urban centers. They moved with high hopes, only to find that exchanging a "cabin in the pines" for a rat infested, dirty, crowded firetrap in the city ghetto was no advantage.

As more families moved into the suburbs, numerous factories, offices, huge shopping centers created industrial complexes, almost cities in themselves, reducing cities to hollow shells with great sections of ghettos housing mostly minority groups, relief clients, unemployable men and women, children whose educational opportunities diminished as schools became overcrowded and offered significantly less quality education.
Thus it was that multiple challenges faced the Rescue Mission. For now the clients were homeless men, families in distress, young people, women, children, the aged, the disturbed. Social Security, at least theoretically, cared for the aged and some others. Unfortunately, inadequate payments, inability to handle money, jackrollers on "The Street" and thieves in the homes often drove the recipients to the Mission for at least part of the month. Helpful though it might be, Public Assistance often left much to be desired.

Again the Mission stepped in to subsidize or supply emergency relief. Cooperation between these various agencies and the Missions is, on the whole, excellent.

In addition, alcoholism increased among both men and women-and young people. Drug abuse was an ever mounting cause for alarm. Veterans returning from war, sick, discouraged, disillusioned, disgusted, needed compassion and care.

Into these changing patterns the Rescue Mission fitted its work to help solve the physical and mental needs of these teeming thousands of all ages.

But more importantly, these dedicated Christian men and women provided the answer to the deeper needs of The Least, The Last, The Lost by maintaining as the major thrust of the work, the GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, proclaimed with love and understanding in the fullest meaning of the words. THE NINETEEN SEVENTIES-ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SERVICE-THE DECADE OF CHALLENGE-THE DECADE OF A CHALLENGE MET!

AREAS OF ACTIVITIES AND INFLUENCE THE STREET CALLED "SKID ROW"

Skid Row or "The Street" as many prefer to call it (the writer being one) is that section of a city where homeless transient, unemployed, handicapped men and women congregate. Usually a comparatively small area, it is crowded with human derelicts occupying cheap lodging houses (flop houses), taverns, eating places, pawn shops, employment agencies. Into such areas of lost hopes and vanished dreams come these social outcasts with a desire to forget and be forgotten. Nearly all cities of 25,000 or more with industrial activity have a Skid Row in one form or
another. There are cities, Chicago, Illinois is an example, in which are several skid rows-some having developed in recent years.

WHY SKID ROW?

Most Skid Rows began years ago as men, coming into the large cities looking for work, usually found jobs in and around the railroad yards. Restaurants, lodging houses and saloons opened to cater to these transient men. Later the employment agency came into being. Not only were jobs and reasonable living available, but men found companionship with those in the same situations and with similar likes and dislikes. For many years movement of transient workers in and out of the areas could be accurately charted months in advance. As pointed out previously in this chapter, things have changed and this is no longer the case.

In these communities, "hotels" cater to the inhabitants with low priced beds in small cage-like rooms known as cubicles-small, poorly equipped rooms of various types. There are, of course, notable exceptions to this general rule. While food is not cheap, considering quality and service, it is more reasonable than other sections. The same is true of the taverns.

The problem of clothing is not a factor as the inhabitant can dress
in any-way. He is welcome in the lodging house, saloon, eating place regardless of the condition of his clothing. Naturally this would be untrue in better class neighborhoods. One factor, on which comment has already been made, is that on "The Street" a person can be anonymous and to many this is important. Many people, both men and women, "hit the skid" with a profound desire to forget the past and be ignored by the world. The use of aliases, popular years ago, is no longer practiced to any significant degree. Social Security cards, Draft registration have all but eliminated this.

The Rescue Mission worker soon learns one characteristic which stands out among the denezins of Skid Row—they are not concerned about the other fellow. "What I have been is my business; what you have been is yours" seems to be a philosophy which allows persons to live in close proximity to others without revealing secrets of a past which is better forgotten. This is one reason why regular methods of case work investigation and counseling are ineffective on "The Street!"

**TERMINOLOGY**

The term "Skid Row" is one created by those who inhabit these districts. It has been used by them for many years. Only in the past twenty-five years or so has the phrase become part of every day language. This came about as a result of publicity. The most logical explanation of the term is that years ago, men working in the lumber camps, built a "Skid" from the top of the hills or mountains to the rivers which lay below. Logs were skidded down these slopes to the waterway and from thence to the mills. So as men went into the towns and rapidly slid down hill in despair through drink or other factors, the street on which they congregated became known as "Skid Road" which later became Skid Row. It is likely that the phrase was first used in Seattle, Washington.


Added to this is what may be a legend or which contains some truth: A track foreman named "Gandy" (probably a nickname adopted from the
tools used) taught the men to do a little rhythmic step as they carried the heavy track over the ties. He would call out "Dance you Gandys, Dance." Thus the track laborer became known as a "Gandy Dancer."

HOBO-this came from the words "Hoe Boy." In early times farmers would hire those on the roads to hoe the crops. These were called Hoe Boys which has degenerated to Hobo, applied to one who roams from place to place but who will work when he needs to.

BUM-TRAMP-One who leads a roving life but does not look for or desire work.

VAGRANT-One who exists without any visible means of support. In recent months, the courts have ruled against the use of this term in relationship to those arrested for just "hanging around" or who are living without apparent means of making a livelihood.

**THE BROADER SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES**

A study of the Missions affiliated with the International Union of Gospel Missions in 1974 dramatically illustrates programming in the 1970's as compared with activities during the period which began 100 years earlier.

All Rescue Missions conduct Gospel Services. 36% house men and 28% provide housing for women. In both cases this may be temporary service to transients or housing on a long range plan leading to a complete rehabilitation. 94% of Missions serve meals; 30 operate Industrial units. In contrast to early days when the work was nearly exclusively with men, 46% have children's work; 35% with Sunday or Bible Schools. Children's homes are maintained by 5%, where unwanted/or problem children are cared for on a long term basis. It was inevitable, as shown previously, that Missions began to deal with family units and 52% now serve this group. 9% care for unwed mothers with well maintained and approved homes.

In connection with programs leading to a complete rehabilitation, 40% own or lease buildings for Rehabilitation Homes. 56% utilize such homes within the city; 26% are on farms; and amazingly 18% have both types. Medical service is available in most Rescue Missions; 23%
conduct clinics. Dental clinics are in use in 11% while others provide such care on a referral basis. Intensive care for alcoholics is carried on with 12% maintaining well equipped, well staffed clinics.

Radio and T.V. programs are carried on a regular basis by 35% and 10% do a specific work for migrants.

A perusal of these figures indicates that Rescue Missions have met the challenge of changing times and situations. Some have moved out of "The Street" to develop programs in different communities. New fields are "invaded" as Mission pioneers move onward. To mention just a few of these new horizons, large numbers of summer camps serve thousands of children, young people, mothers and families. Some of these are rented, others, owned by Missions, rank high in land, buildings, equipment, quality of program, staff and above all, spiritual emphasis.

Girls and boys in need of custodial care; others requiring a temporary place of abode; facilities for women with children; the aged, whose Social Security payments are insufficient or who, because of circumstances need minimal custodial care, call for service far removed from Skid Row. Half-way houses for men, converted in the Mission, where they receive counseling, guidance, the opportunity to adjust on their way back to normalcy show the Mission is ready and able to bridge the gap.

One of the newer areas is with teenagers. This is one of the most complex situations to face the Missioner. Some Missions are meeting this with enthusiasm, vision, compassion and love. Programs developed to a high degree of effectiveness are achieving results which stagger the imagination. To sum up: The program of the Rescue Missions, to reach The Least, The Last, The Lost is so flexible that it is readily adjustable to meet whatever exigency is currently present.

**WHY SPECIALIZATION?**

A question asked is "Why can't this work be done by the organized church?"

The regular organized church has neither equipment, staff or know how for the highly specialized services necessary to adequately perform
the work of Christ in these fields. Church buildings are designed and built for worship services, classes and meetings. Some have gymnasiums and recreational facilities and limited dining arrangements. But these are not planned or built to withstand twelve to twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week type of schedule. In many cases zoning laws would prohibit sleeping people. Insurance rates would skyrocket if the run of the mill activities of the average Rescue Mission were added to the church program.

Pastors are trained for preaching, teaching, pastoral work, counseling, and the like. But, as a retired Dean of Men of a large Bible School said after some weeks assisting in the counseling program of a Mission: "You know, I have had to forget much of what I used in counseling students. The people of the Mission are so different; their problems more complex and they are so very sensitive." Special training in counseling Mission clients is absolutely necessary, for ordinary approaches will not work.

One factor which "outsiders" do not understand is that the men, women, boys and girls, even in the most desperate situations, physically, mentally, spiritually, do have a lot of pride. While pastors and people might welcome them into the local church, lack of decent clothing, for one thing, would be embarrassing, and keep many from taking advantage of such opportunities.

There is a relationship however. The Rescue Mission needs the Church and the Church needs the Mission. This will be discussed later. Together in a spirit of brotherly love and cooperation Mission and Church go forward in serving The Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church has a hem to its garment
Which reaches the very dust
It can cleanse the stains from the streets and lanes
And because it can, it must.

After quoting this poem, a pastor said "The Rescue Mission is the hem of the garment. Through the blood of Christ, it can help cleanse the stains from the streets and lanes. It can be done and the Mission MUST do it."
WHY CAN'T THE SECULAR AGENCY DO THIS?

What is said here does not reflect in any way on the character, ability or program of the secular social service agency. There is, in most areas, the finest cooperation between these and the Rescue Mission. However, the basic problem of the clients of the Mission is SIN! Regardless of how one may try to disguise it, the cause is the same. The only cure for sin is The Blood of Christ.

By its very nature, the secular organization cannot preach the Gospel. It is recognized that many fine Christians are in Social work. As far as possible these dedicated people do present Christ by lives and attitudes in dealing with clients. The Rescue Mission is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The best in material, mental and physical service is given and in addition and most importantly the Gospel is preached in all its fulness—“THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST CLEANSES FROM ALL SIN.”

THE BACKGROUND AND GROWTH OF RESCUE MISSIONS

The following is from "The Romance of Rescue" written about 1950 by the late Dr. William E. Paul. "Adam was the first Rescue Mission prospect for he went into sin in the characteristic way of the down and outer. He began when he looked upon sin as pleasant to the eye and good to the taste. The sin quickly stripped him and left him naked before God. And the penalty of sin-driven out of the garden into a country, the very ground of which was cursed; thorns and thistles became his portion and in the sweat of his face did he eat bread ... The third chapter of Genesis is a Rescue Mission story.

"In America the Rescue Mission movement began about 1830 when a work was started by the Western Seamen's Friends Society to help sailors who worked on the Great Lakes. This organization was thoroughly undenominational having among its early leaders Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian and Episcopalian ministers and laymen. The work among sailors was a fine work and Sunday schools and grade schools were organized. The public school system in Cleveland grew out of these little schools. Later camps were added and then legal and medical services made available.
"The Society expanded its work by organizing "Bethel Homes" or "Bethel Missions" along the Lakes. In 1830 a Mission was opened in Cincinnati known as the Bethel Lodging House. In 1865 this Mission gave shelter to 68,125 persons. A nursery cared for 9,151 children, one day care. A medical department reported 5,831 patients, 275 treated by dentists and 245 eye, ear and throat.

"Several other missions were organized along the Great Lakes. In the early days, Rescue Missions moved invariably in one of several directions; either they became churches or branches of churches called chapels or they disappeared when the need for the Mission was met by changing conditions or they closed from lack of funds.

"In 1872 The Jerry McAuley Mission was founded in New York City. This is the oldest Mission in the country now in operation. The Bethel Mission in Duluth, Minnesota was opened by The Western Seamen's Friends Society in the year 1873. The motto of this Mission, adopted at the founding, was "No Creed But Christ, No Law But Love" a phrase credited to Jerry McAuley. The term Rescue Mission has an obscure beginning. In all likelihood it was first used about 1888 by a man named H. G. Gibband. When he opened a Mission in Syracuse, N.Y. that year he utilized these words. Doubtless he knew of places of shelter for runaway slaves which were called "Rescue Band" or "Places of Refuge" and the like.

"Rescue Missions developed rapidly following the success of the Jerry McAuley Mission in the City of New York."

(End of material from The Romance of Rescue)

Following such humble beginnings, Rescue Missions have grown at an amazing pace. The areas of service and type of programs now used to meet these needs have been pointed out. There are Missions with land and property valuation in excess of one million dollars; annual budgets well over the quarter million mark. Some have outstanding camps and excellent farms. Others have dining and kitchen facilities the equal of those in fine hotels or motels. Mission workers are recognized as outstanding leaders in their communities and receive many civic honors and citations.
The pinpointing of some of these developments will show that the WORK OF RESCUE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND VITAL WORKS IN THE WORLD.

A word of caution here. In the July, 1961 issue of "Our Missions," the magazine of the International Union of Gospel Mission, contained an article entitled "How Big Is Big?" (William Seath). This emphasized the danger of Mission workers becoming imbued with the criterion of the world-"if it is big it must be good." To illustrate the fallacy of this type of thinking, a summary of the annual reports of two missions was given. One had a property valuation of $200,000.00, large staff, annual budget $100,000.00. This organization reported 105 Gospel services, average audience of 40 and 200 people prayed with. The other Mission, in a rented building, annual budget of $3,000.00 held 366 services, average attendance of 12, but indicated 400 people prayed with! One thirtieth the amount of money spent but twice as many prayed with. How big is big?

We need to stress quality rather than quantity. The workers of the so called "large" mission should not "look down" on those with a small work. On the other hand, those who operate in the smaller manner should not be critical of the Mission with a big building, large budget and staff. There is room and need for both. In a spirit of love and cooperation all should work in the way God has called, each one appreciating the other person, whom The Lord has directed to a different method of serving our wonderful Christ.