

FOREWORD

RECENTLY I RETURNED from a ministry trip to India, but within thirty-six hours I was on the road again. This time my destination was a women's retreat about ninety minutes from Atlanta, Georgia. I spoke in the evening, and the next morning the director of the retreat came to my cabin with two Iranian women she felt I would be interested in meeting. I was given the American version of their names: Marcie and Miriam.

We chatted for a moment, and then, knowing they were both from a Muslim nation, I asked them each to share how they had come to place their faith in Jesus Christ. I wasn't prepared for the thrilling blessing they began to pour out upon me as they shared their personal journeys of faith. They hadn't been just saved from sin. They hadn't just converted to the Christian religion. They were both in love with Jesus! For the next hour or so, they shared with me why—it was a love forged in the fires of pain and persecution.

Toward the end of our time together, with tears streaming down their lovely faces, they made a comment that haunts me still: They said it had been easier for them to experience God's peace and presence and power inside Evin Prison than on the outside in America. Evin Prison! The prison in Tehran that has a worse reputation than Alcatraz or Angola in the United States. A place that causes even the strongest to shudder. How could that be?

Because I had a plane to catch, there was no time to find out why they would make such a comment. Or to hear some of their experiences inside Evin Prison. Or how they had known God there. Or how their faith had not only survived the experience, but thrived in it! So several weeks later,

when I received a letter from them asking for permission to send me the manuscript of their new book for the purpose of writing the foreword, I quickly agreed. I couldn't wait to plunge into the details of their experience. And I was not disappointed.

As I read, I was held spellbound page after page, story after story. But what impacted me most was not the words they used to describe life behind prison walls, but what I read between the lines. I was, and still am, blown away by their boldness, their strength, their steadfastness, and their unwavering declaration of Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the risen Lord and King. They lovingly and fearlessly presented Him to broken women who responded with tearful desperation, to manipulative women who tried to use them for their own purposes, to hostile officials and guards who had the power to torture, to judges who could have released them earlier if they had just been willing to compromise their faith.

Inside the dark hell of Evin Prison, Marcie and Miriam turned on the Light! Their love for the least, their kindness to the meanest, their gentleness to the roughest, their willingness to serve in the dirtiest place imaginable is truly a stunningly clear reflection of the Jesus they love, as well as evidence of His presence inside those walls. He didn't just carry them through *somehow*—He carried them through triumphantly!

And I wondered . . . has God brought them here, to America, to share their remarkable stories in order to prepare His people for what's coming? So we will know that our God is faithful and true, wherever we find ourselves? Because we all have our prison experiences, don't we? Prisons of physical pain, of financial ruin, of emotional brokenness, of spousal abuse, of marital betrayal . . .

Captive in Iran has strengthened my faith. Read it, and I believe you will be strengthened in yours, also.

Anne Graham Lotz