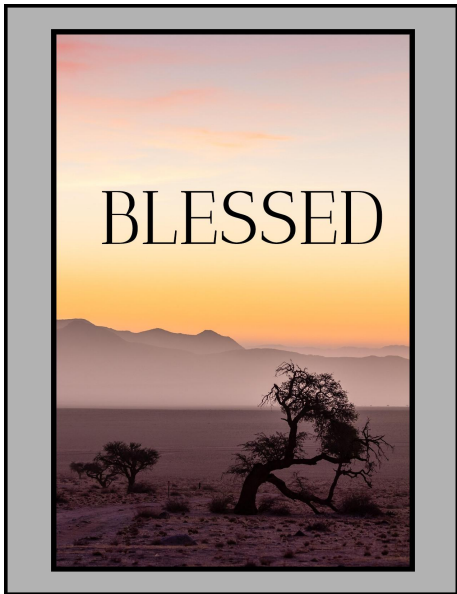




August 3, 2025

PART EIGHT

Wounds that Heal the World

Matthew 5:10; Galatians 5:22

Synopsis: *The perennial reality of the persecuted church can be seen in light of the redemptive death of Jesus. As such we behold a vision of the unstoppable kingdom of Jesus, that when it is mown down, it rises again with more body, more strength, and more grace for the healing of the world and the very perpetrators of the persecution. The corresponding Spirit-fruit of gentleness gives the persecuted church the template of how to respond to a power-hungry and violent world.*

The Beatitudes Twist

Instead of recommended postures with rewards, these are suffering states (cf. **Luke 6:20-23**)

Each deficit, in contact with the kingdom of God, reverses course into a trajectory of blessedness

Overlaying the 9 fruits of the Spirit with the 9 Beatitudes: today *being persecuted* pairs with *gentleness*

Blessed are the Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

Righteousness: as the living out the way of Jesus (see **Matt 5:11 and 21:32**)

Nonconformity pokes the bear of power with fear: what cannot be controlled must be destroyed: **John 2:24**

Jesus and His followers are paragons of freedom: **John 8:31-36**

The metaphor of children versus slaves (see **verse 35**)

The *nothing to lose* frame of mind of Matthew **10:16-33**: Spirit mouthpiece (**17-20**), solidarity with Jesus (**24-25**), the revelation of all things (**26**), penultimate nature of things (**28**), God's intimate concern and care (**29-31**), confirmation as children, guaranteed home (**32-33**)

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven: belonging to something that cannot be taken away

This Radical Freedom is the Seed of Love

Erases the need for retaliation: **Matt 5:38-42**

Powers the ability to forgive enemies: **Matt 5:43-48**; resources generosity: **Matt 6:19-24**

"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do": **Luke 23:34**

Stories of courageous freedom of the persecuted: *Ernest Gordon, Mehdi Dibaj*

Healing the Wounds of the World

The Spirit-fruit of gentleness to lead the way forward: **Galatians 5:22**

Love returned shines a light on evil as vastly inferior force

Opens a pathway out for those enslaved in dark: *Surely this was the son of God:* **Matt 27:4**; Saint Longinus

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church: Tertullian

And a child shall lead forth the former predators into a place of peace: **Isaiah 11:1-9**

The Story:

Mehdi Dibaj was a Muslim-born Iranian who converted to Christianity and became a pastor. For this, he was arrested in 1984 and held in prison — often in solitary confinement — for nearly **10 years**. In 1993, he was sentenced to death for apostasy. But before execution, he wrote a powerful defense of his faith, concluding with:

“Jesus Christ is our Savior, and He is the Son of God. To know Him is life everlasting. I, a useless sinner, have believed in His beloved Person and all His words and miracles recorded in the Gospel.”

His dignity, clarity, and unwavering forgiveness gained attention, even among government officials. International pressure and Iranian public sympathy **delayed his execution**. One of his guards reportedly told a visitor:

“We don’t know what to do with him. He loves us. We beat him, and he blesses us.”

Eventually, Dibaj was released in January 1994 — but was assassinated later that year. His legacy lives on in the underground church in Iran, where many converts say the faith and courage of martyrs like Dibaj led them to Christ.

This scene is inspired by true events from **Ernest Gordon’s autobiography, *Through the Valley of the Kwai***. In the book, he recounts how selfless acts by Christian prisoners — including some who literally gave their lives for others — deeply changed the moral atmosphere of the camp.