

The Great Suffering of North Korean Christians

by Edgar Reich

Christians in North Korea face severe persecution, including torture, imprisonment, and death, for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 37:49

Scripture: Matthew 5:11-12, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 4:29-32, Philippians 2:17

Topics: "North Korea"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker discusses the persecution and martyrdom of Christians in various countries, including North Korea. The speaker shares stories of believers who faced imprisonment, torture, and death for their faith in Jesus Christ. The transcript highlights the courage and resilience of these Christians, who remained steadfast in their devotion to Christ even in the face of extreme suffering. The speaker calls on listeners to pray for persecuted believers, asking for God's protection, provision, and the opportunity to share the Gospel with others.

Transcript

Some of those that have seen the things that were happening to Christians and saw the Christian faith became a believer themselves as a result of such tortures. Tonight we will be speaking about the nation of North Korea. The talk is about 25 minutes.

I'm sorry, dear sisters, you'll have to bear with me. Here's a witness from a former North Korean policeman. He told about the arrest of 11 church members.

Two were tortured to death and 11 were executed. A group of Christians was discovered in North Korea. They had worshipped God and his son Jesus.

Their children were with them. The adults were told by those who had captured them, if you do not acknowledge our dear leader as God and if you do not renounce Christ, your children will be hanged. One of the children looked up at her mother.

What would she do? Earlier that morning, 28 Christians were bound and taken before a screaming crowd of North Koreans. The guards made it clear, if you don't deny your Christ, you will die. The mother thought of her child, but she could not deny her Lord.

The other Christians quietly made the same decision. Their God was real. The North Korean guards again shouted, deny your Christ or we will hang your children.

The children looked at their parents. The parents loved their children, but they knew it was an eternal heaven for them. They could not deny their Lord.

One mother leaned down to her child and whispered with confidence and peace, today my love, I will see you in heaven. All the children were hanged. The adults who were still bound had to lie down on the pavement.

A large steamroller was brought, which was used to flatten the road. They were given one more chance. The guard told them, if you do not give up your Christ, you will die.

If you give up your Christ, you will live. The Christians thought of their children in heaven and started to sing softly. As the steamroller started to roll over them and crushing them to death, they were singing, more love, O Christ to thee, more love to thee.

Christians in North Korea live under unimaginable horrors and tyranny. Worshipping in public or if caught in private brings systematic torture, imprisonment, and death. Carrying a Bible or speaking to others about Jesus Christ can bring a cruel death.

If a North Korean Christian believes, he affects three generations of his family, including the children. The government kills parents, spouses, uncles, aunts, and children all must suffer. They will be first of all incarcerated in death camps, and it does not matter whether they believe.

North Korean Christians aren't simply killed for their faith in Christ. They are annihilated with construction equipment and other means. In the death camps, some Christians are killed by being tested with biological weapons, or starved to death, or worked to death, or shot, or electrocuted.

Others are shot in front of their children. Newborn babies have their brains crushed or needles inserted in their spine in front of their mothers. These are crimes against humanity reminiscent of Auschwitz, to which the world declared never again.

Just a few years later, such atrocities are being perpetrated against North Korean Christians, and the world stands by. The dictatorial rulers of North Korea have been the Kim family since the 1950s. They're ruling over the nation as god-kings.

Their control is absolute, they're secretive, and they rule with unimaginable brutality and tyranny. Kim Il-sung was the original leader of this family. He died in 1994.

He was deified as god, embalmed, and is worshipped as a permanent god. There was recently an anniversary of his death, and if you go to YouTube and you enter North Korean weeping, you will see how the nation's people weep and wail for him as a permanent god. His reign was followed by his son named Kim Yong-il, who died in 2011.

He was succeeded by Kim Jong-un, the grandson of the god. Kim Jong-un is the current leader. He oversees a nation of approximately 24 to 25 million people, with the fourth largest army in the world of 1.1 million soldiers.

No outside news is allowed. TV and the newspapers are state-controlled. There is no internet, nor are there cell phones.

The state religion called Juche declares Kim Il-sung, the first leader, as god. The government claims that the second leader also has divine attributes. Supposedly his son Kim Yong-il was born on Mount Paektu, a sacred mountain on the border with China.

His birth was to have been announced by birds, and a double rainbow showed at the birth, plus a new star. Now Christians say these facts are all contrived. According to the North Korea Constitution, Article 1, Section 1, all North Koreans are required to worship Kim Il-sung with all their heart and mind, even after his death.

They have to worship the pictures and statues of Kim Il-sung. A North Korea witness said, we must hang Kim Il-sung's picture in our homes. We display the portraits of the Kim family on the best wall, which is compulsory.

The portraits must be hung in the best place, and nothing else can be hung underneath their portraits. The pictures indicate that Kim Il-sung is god. We hang the picture for the purpose of reminding ourselves that we depend on him.

Only Kim Il-sung is god in North Korea. All citizens in North Korea are required to worship their god and their current leader. Citizens are required to attend regular self-criticism meetings, which include the singing of songs of praise to Kim Il-sung from a 600-song hymnal with readings from the writings of Kim Il-sung, including Sung's Ten Principles, which remind us of Ten Commandments.

The people must make emotional professions of faith to the Kim leadership, or else they risk jail and annihilation. Everyone is trained from birth to love and worship their dear leader as god. The indoctrination starts in kindergarten and requires total submission and allegiance to a divine supreme being, that of the dear leader.

A refugee commented, we must worship him. Christians say grace to their god. We must say grace to our god, Kim Yong-il.

Having faith in the Christian god is an act of espionage. Any open worship of the true god, including bible reading, Christian literature distribution, and witnessing is met with horrifying executions and death camps. Where one Christian is found, three generations of that family will be eliminated through death camps and executions.

North Korean Christians endure the most suffering in the world. Here's another witness. A witness of the North Korean army, who later became a Christian, reported the following.

The team had been sent to widen a highway. When they demolished a vacated house, they found a bible and a small notebook with 25 names. One was identified as pastor, two as assistant pastors, two as elders, and 20 other names, apparently participants in the Christian group.

The military police unit investigated and picked up the 25 persons without formal arrest. They were brought to the road construction site. Four rows of spectators were assembled.

The five leaders were bound and laid to lie down in front of the steam roller, which was used at the construction site to crush and level the roadway. The other 20 Christians were held at the site to watch. The condemned were told if you abandon your faith and serve only Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, you will not be killed.

None of the five said a word. The steam roller started to roll over the five leaders. Some of the fellow Christians assembled to watch the executioners cried, screamed out, or fainted when the skulls made a popping sound as the blood rushed beneath the steam roller.

Why must this happen, we ask. The martyrs' blood drenched the ground. This has happened in Christian history and it happens today in many countries.

The soldiers who witnessed the execution could not understand later. The one who reported this found Jesus because of the testimony of 25 who saved his life for eternity. The soldiers took the other 20 prisoners to North Korea prison camps, better described as death camps.

Because of the three-generation rule, it is certain that their parents, uncles, aunts, and children were also investigated and put into the prison camps. Generally, these family members will be sent regardless of whether they are believers. And they follow a rule that all of the family members must be annihilated to destroy the faith.

The average sentence for a prison death camp sentence is 15 years. The average time a person survives in a death camp is five years. Here is a survivor testimony.

I want the world to know about the cruelty we faced in the North Korea prison camps. I was forced to go to Yodok prison camp. I spent nine long years there.

They treated us like animals. Even animals lived better than we did. The thing that made me feel so sad yet furious was the fact they also put my parents and children in Yodok prison camp.

Because only I was a Christian, my father, mother, and whole family were in prison. It hurt me so much. They treated my kids like animals.

It made me so angry what they did. I want the whole world to know what they did. She said she and her family members were forced to engage in heavy labor both day and night before a father was more than he could physically endure.

First, she said I lost my father in Yodok prison. She said I had to wrap his body in a straw mat because there was no coffin. Not long after my mother died, she starved to death.

I also lost my children. My heart was so broken. I felt very sad and miserable.

It hurt me so much. I'll never forget seeing so many dead bodies from famine stacked all around the fields and mountains. I want to tell the whole world.

Here's another witness from the prison camps. We were in constant fear. Even the least infraction brought a reduction in food allowance.

Being hungry all the time was the worst strategy. Here I ate my first mouse. Escape attempts are punished by death.

Not doing your work meant execution by firing squad. Stealing or taking food meant to be executed by firing squad. Disobedience is punished by death.

Running away is punished by death and not reporting others trying to escape is punished by death. Another survivor reported my grandmother, uncle, and little sister were taken to a death camp as part of the purge of three generations. Everyone was so weak, fragile, thin in rags, bones showing, all ribs showing, and shivering in the cold.

With no food, they started dying slowly. Another reported the worst jobs were in mining. Some were shot and some were eaten by the guard dogs.

Now, Beloved, it says for us in Scripture, we disregard the Scripture in the Western world. It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him. Granting to suffer is a privilege.

God will give each a martyr's crown called a crown of life, which is a reward for eternity. Yes, there might be suffering for a time, but God has a reward for us. Here's another witness.

A young woman was washing clothes in a North Korea river. When gathering her clothes, a small Bible or Christian book fell to the ground. Another woman reported the girl to the police.

The young woman and her father, about 60 years old, were arrested and held by the local police for about three months. During that time, the woman and her father were investigated and interrogated. They were taken to a market area in town and accused of trafficking.

A brief public trial was held, which consisted of the charges. They were found guilty of a capital offense. Then they were condemned as traitors to the nation and their God leader.

Before the execution, people were assembled to witness the death. This included teachers and students from a school nearby, fourth grade and up. It included students from middle and high school and people who had come to the market.

Seven police fired three shots each into the two victims who had been tied to poles. The force of the rifle shots caused blood and brain matter to be blown out of their heads. The martyr's blood drenched the ground.

By most estimates, there are 100,000 Christians in North Korea. 40,000 of them are in prison camps. Then before the Kim Jong-un families, there were actually 400,000 Christians.

So 300,000 are missing. They have either been killed or they have run into China and South Korea and other nations nearby. Here's another witness.

A North Korean refugee shared, someone told me about a man at home reading the Bible by himself. He was so into reading the Bible at night that he did not hear a knocking sound at his door. As the knocking sound grew into loud banging, he realized someone was at the door and quickly hid his Bible.

The local village director and two neighbors rushed in asking questions and searched his small house. One of them found the Bible. After that, he was really afraid and thought he and his family was going to die.

He knew what would happen if they found the Bible. But the neighbor who found the Bible hid the Bible in his own clothes and told the others there was nothing in the house. The next day, the man who took the Bible returned alone.

He gave the Bible back and asked, Do you also believe in Jesus Christ? I am a believer. Because of the current situation in our country, I cannot fellowship with other believers, so I'm keeping my faith to myself. I'm so thankful to God that there are other believers besides me.

Please be more careful with reading your Bible and please pray for me. Even though I work for the government, I secretly help out other believers. We should pray for other believers and that someday North Korea will freely allow people to receive God's Word.

Home dwellings and other secret places are the only option for North Korean believers because of the secrecy requirements. They not only risk their own lives but also the lives of three generations of their families. So you ask, How can the gospel spread under such circumstances? Well, a young woman from a pre-Korean war Christian family related, My mother and her friends continue to meet and worship secretly.

Another believer stated, I also had a pre-Korean war Christian mother who continued to worship in secret with two relatives using a Bible that her grandfather had brought back from Japan many years ago. Another Christian said, I participate in an underground church of 12 members, all relatives, and sometimes a missionary comes from China. The number of home churches in North Korea is estimated at about 10,000 based on a number of testimonies.

The underground home church might be very small, only three or four people, and the churches have evolved primarily through three means. Though there were grandparents who believe, then others who left Korea, they fled to China and South Korea, they heard the gospel there and then they came back. And then the third part are those that risk their lives to tell others.

And here's an example of a witness from a North Korean woman returning from China. She brought back a Bible from China and she and her mother are secretly reading the Bible at home under a blanket. Here is a North Korean sharing the gospel openly, and this is mainly happening in the prisons, because in the prisons they know they're going to die anyhow, so many of them decide to share the gospel openly.

And here was a woman who never saw organized Christian worship, but in prison there was a crazy woman in her 60s praying to God to save her. And God did a miracle and she was released. And this got this other person thinking, this God must be able and real.

Here's another Christian witness from a woman that was also put into the death camps. She said, they found my handwritten Bible verses, three generations of my family were taken to the prison death camps. This included my parents, my husband, and my children.

I have never heard of them again. I don't know if they're dead or alive. Prison camp is hell.

A woman in her 60s knew of eight persons who were Christians, who met secretly in a group of three or four to read handwritten Bible verses. Then a refugee reported, many times the authorities came to our house without warning. They always do this to people.

It's not because we're Christians, it's because they want to scare people and make sure that we don't cause trouble. It is their way of making sure that everyone only worships the North Korea leader. One time

I copied Bible verses by hand.

I always prayed they would not be found because I would put my family's lives in danger. Another Christian reported, one day the police came to my house and searched it. They found pieces of the Bible verses I had copied by hand.

They shouted many times at me and took away my husband and children. We were all taken to a prison camp where they worked us to death. Now I'm not sure whether my parents and kids are still doing hard labor or if they're even alive.

I'm always praying for Christians left behind in North Korean prison camps because I know that living there is like being in hell. Another witness, three Christians being executed publicly. It was one woman about 22 years old and two men about 23 years old.

The crime was having smuggled Bibles into North Korea. Sharing of scripture is necessary in the North Korean church for their very few Bibles. Members of the underground church regularly share scripture verses and lines of hymns written on pieces of paper.

According to Asia News, North Korea reported the execution of three leaders of underground churches and jailed 20 other Christians. In 2009, the Associated Press reported that a 33-year-old Christian woman by the name of Ri Hyun-uk was accused of distributing Bibles and spying for foreign countries. She was publicly executed in North Korea.

A witness said, it's not just our life we give it as Christians. It is also the life of our children. It is also the life of our fathers and mothers.

We must watch our children suffer and die or they must watch when we are executed. As a Christian child grows up in North Korea, it is very dangerous. Children learn in school to worship Kim Il-sung as God.

They have been brainwashed since kindergarten to believe in a false god. They learn sometimes about the true God as seen and heard through their parents. The danger is if the child gets upset for whatever reason, gets angry at their parents, they may well say at school, well my mom and dad, they have another God.

And if they say that, their parents die. Now some Christian organizations report that most Christian families exclude their children because of the fear that they may innocently disclose the worship at home. A former North Korean civil servant related the brutal treatment of Christian children, including their babies being killed.

Prison guards regularly attempt to get Christian prisoners to recant their faith. Abortions are forced on female prisoners, some in the late stages of pregnancy. There is the idea of collective punishment where people with bad ideology must be stopped from producing children.

The women are forced to have their babies removed and killed. One reported about such forced abortion which was on a woman in her ninth month of pregnancy. Still the baby was born alive.

While the mother pleaded for a baby's life as it writhed on the floor, the guard came and stepped on the neck of the baby. The mother was publicly executed for pleading for a child's life. The blood of the martyr drenches and borders the soil of North Korea.

Dear sisters and brothers, the civil servant could not understand such faith and later he became a Christian. A 22-year-old returned from China to Korea with the purpose of sharing the gospel with friends and family. She was arrested after one and a half years when she was discovered to be distributing Bibles and hymnals.

She was cruelly punished as a terrorist. However, she was not executed by a miracle from God. God had still more work for her.

One day a prisoner was sent to her in the same prison. The new prisoner was a spy from North Korea in China who was trapping North Korean defectors. The former undercover spy had tried to defect from China to South Korea but was caught.

The new prisoner asked the 22-year-old Christian if God existed and if he could forgive her because she regretted what she had done to others. The Christian who had only been trained for four and a half months in China led the spy to Christ. Then she wrote down some Bible verses on paper for the former spy to help her.

Another Christian who was witnessing was publicly executed for distributing Bibles. Now, love it. The other problem about North Korea is that 70 to 90 percent of those that openly profess Christ are not Christians.

They are government spies and agents who are trying to trap underground church members. The mere mention of the name is not enough to prompt an investigation, if not a conviction. So it is very difficult to get up-to-date information.

However, the proclamation of the gospel in prison camps is more open. Prisoners feel if one is dead already, one should share that there is an eternal life, giving others hope for eternity. Some North Korean Christians prefer to meet their fate in the death camps, being finally able to speak freely of Jesus Christ, their Lord.

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him. This comes from the Bible. But even if I'm being like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I'm glad and I rejoice with all of you, so you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Beloved, in closing I will share the prayer of the North Korean Christians with you again. Some of you have heard it, but some of the house fellowships pray this together with the Lord's Prayer, and they pray our persecution and suffering, or our joy and honor. We want to accept ridicule, scorn, and disadvantages with joy in Jesus' name.

We want to wipe away others' tears and comfort the suffering. We want to be ready to risk our lives because of our love for our neighbor, so that they also become Christians. We want to live our lives according to the standards given in the Bible, God's Word.

Now, beloved, Kim Il-sung and Kim Yong-il are examples of a future world leader who will also serve as God. He is described in the book of Revelation, and Scripture says about the coming Antichrist, don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or his worship, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Antichrist will declare himself God and persecute Christians, just as these North Korean leaders are doing, and it says in Scripture, and it talks about the beast here, it opened up its mouth to blaspheme God and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. This beast was given power to wage war, and beloved, just listen to this, it was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. The book of Revelation is full with Christian martyrs.

May I ask you, dear sisters and brothers, how is your faith? Will you still believe in God? Will you still follow the Lord? Will you still believe in him if you have to suffer? And now in closing, here are prayer requests for the North Korean church. Here are specific things that we can pray for, and the book of Acts, it says, now Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word boldly, and that is through the filling and power of the Holy Spirit. Then Lord, stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

Pray that God would give them forgiveness and love. Pray that God would provide Bibles for them. Pray that they would be able to find someone to fellowship with.

Pray that their friends and neighbors would discover Jesus through their testimony. Pray that they have enough food to eat, and I did not spend much time on that, but there's classes of citizens that do not get, sorry, the last category is where Christians are in, and they do not get any allocated food subsidies, so they're starving. They're hungry most of the time.

Then pray that they would remain strong under torture and not deny Jesus. Pray for the leader Kim Jong-un to accept Jesus as the savior and to lead his country back to Christ. Pray for North Korea to become a nation more open to Christianity.

Pray for faith, strength, and courage for them to endure, and pray for comfort in tribulation. Pray for the torturers that they may become Christians. Pray that the North Korean Christians would bless their torturers and that they would pray for them and do good to them.

Pray for North Korean Christians to remain strong in faith and to believe in God, and that God is a God of miracles, knowing that God knows best. Pray that they may not be led into temptation. Pray that God would deliver them from evil according to his will.

And then lastly, besides praying, I also ask you to consider writing a letter to the North Korean government and to the United Nations. And you can do so if you go and google NorthKoreanChristians.com. It's a website called NorthKoreanChristians.com. When that website comes up on the left-hand side, it says letters. Click on letters, and it will give you the addresses and draft letters that you can copy to help our dear sisters and brothers in Christ.

Let us close in prayer. Heavenly Father, I am so humbled. I can hardly speak.

Lord, I don't know what to say, Lord, because when I see their Christianity compared to mine, Lord, I don't know what to say, Lord. But I pray, please help them, Lord. Deliver them from evil.

Give them a strong witness. And I pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

And now I turn it over to you, dear Brother Blayne.

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