

Speaker: Mr. Kim

Voice of the Martyrs National Conference

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I would like to give thanks to VOM and Pastor and Mrs. F. for inviting me here today. I am an NK defector who escaped from NK and came to South Korea in 1996. Now I live in Seoul, South Korea.

As an NK defector, I want to express my sincere thanks to you and to the missionaries and pastors and prayer warriors who are passionate about the cruelest and most anti-Christian country on the face of the earth: North Korea.

When I use the phrase, “NK defector”, I am referring to those who escaped from North Korea and who presently live in South Korea. They formerly experienced the ideology and dictatorship of Kim Jung-Il; now they have been given the opportunity to experience freedom in Christ and democracy in South Korea.

There are about 12,000 NK defectors in South Korea. Approximately 300,000 other NK defectors are scattered across China and Southeast Asia living as beggars. I was a commissioned officer in the North Korean military, but I joined the line of NK beggars in China when I became disillusioned by the system of Kim Jung-Il.

China is the land NK defectors pass through on the way to South Korea. But the Chinese PSB—the public security bureau—arrests these defectors and sends them back to NK in accordance with China’s agreement with NK. It is widely known that repatriated NK defectors are branded as “national traitors” and are either executed or sent to prisons.

That is why NK defectors hide out in China, trying to avoid the eyes of the PSB. The only people they can rely on are the Korean-Chinese churches. When I left North Korea, I had heard rumors about the Korean-Chinese church helping NK defectors, so I went to one of those churches in Yang-ji on the China side of the NK border.

The church opened the door after hearing that I was an NK defector. But the moment I passed through the door, I got to meet a stranger known as “GOD”. We were introduced in the context of a worship service.

As the days went by, I came to the conclusion that God was actually the same as Kim, Jung-Il. Both made promises about people’s futures and destinies. The word of God that was always quoted during worship sounded to me like the quotations of Kim, Jung-Il. And I had learned that those quotations were worthless.

The way Christians taught us to pray was very similar to the way NK people are taught to criticize themselves during what we call the “Life harmony” period of every week. It made me feel very sad. Even more, I felt sad that Christians had a trinity just like North Koreans do. The only difference was that the NK trinity was composed of leader, party, and people.

There are 600 songs in the NK songbook of praise to Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jung-Il. When I saw the Christian hymnal with only 558 songs, I felt that the Christian God must be weaker, and I felt sorry for the church people who relied so much on this invisible God.

The truth was, I refused God very badly, but I could not leave the church because I had nowhere to go and nothing to eat. One day, I went to the mountain to pray at the suggestion of the pastor. There I secretly overheard the prayers of Korean Chinese Christians. Even though the temperature was 30 degrees, they were sweating due to their passionate prayer.

They all prayed for the souls of the North Koreans who were starving to death and the NK defectors who were wandering around the cities of China. I realized that it would be incredibly inappropriate for me to criticize these people who were praying passionately and tearfully for people who no one else treated as human beings.

Nevertheless, when they directed us to copy the Bible by hand as part of our discipleship training, I hated it more than dying. There was a South Korean pastor, a US citizen, who I met at the church. He promised to send me to South Korea if I copied the whole Bible one time.

I thought that it was impossible to copy the Bible, because there were so many books! I didn't think I could last that long.

In February 1997, I gave up copying the Bible and left the church. I wandered around the cities of Chun-Jin and Dae-Reon in China, where I heard there was a ship getting ready to sail to South Korea. But while waiting, I was arrested on February 9th by PSB agents who were guarding the Dae-Reon port.

They put handcuffs on me and forced me to return to NK due to the fact that I was a high level military officer and had tried to board a ship to South Korea.

Representatives from the State Security Agency in Onsung who took custody of me from the PSB began to torture me terribly as they interrogated me. All of the bones in my fingers were broken, and my mouth was torn. I came to have blood all over my body and was sent to my prison cell after less than an hour.

On my ninth day in On-Sung, the three officers whom I used to work with in my troop appeared. As usual in North Korea, it meant that they would act to carry out the sentence after a public trial was held.

During the time I was in their custody, all I could do was pray to the God I had rejected. It was a day's journey to our final destination, but it took the train three days to get

there because of the repeated stops it had to make. I prayed and prayed to the Lord desperately the whole time.

During those three days, I confessed to God over and over again that I wanted to live. I told the Lord that I would give my life to Him if He saved me. NK soldiers who were guiding me made fun of me as 'crazy' and became careless in their guarding of me as we came closer to Pyong-Yang in North Korea.

I stood up to go to the restroom, thinking how I could make my break. The bathroom was a mess because it had not been cleaned for three days. When the soldier hesitated behind me because of the mess, I sensed that this was my only chance to escape.

Without thinking, I jumped off the moving train by launching my whole body through the window frame. I aged one thousand years in that moment. I knew that I had to risk death if I wanted to live.

As the train disappeared from sight, I was flattened on the ground without any harm to my body. My mouth was crying out to the Lord. I confessed and confessed, "God, there is no comparison between you and Kim Jung-Il. Thank you for saving me!" And I asked Him to please help me to escape from this hellish country and into China one more time. I prayed and prayed desperately.

Even with my face on wanted posters, I escaped back to the church in China where I had previously been. Even though I was a wanted man, the church welcomed me again unconditionally and I began at last to live a faithful life.

The people around me said, "You met Jesus when you escaped from the train." Some insisted that "The Lord prepared the path by raising you up." But I want to confess to you now that I did not truly learn to put my full faith and trust in the Lord Jesus until last year – ten years after I jumped off that train.

After I came to South Korea, I completed my undergraduate and graduate degrees and was selected as the president of the NK defectors' association. Also I enjoyed freedom as a National Broadcasting writer and MC. In 2004, I founded "Freedom NK broadcasting".

One day, I met Pastor and Mrs. F. from VOM who were devoted to NK ministry. They reminded me and the people around me that we should not forget the people who we left in our hometown.

I began to develop a lot of ideas about how to minister to North Koreans in North Korea, and I came to be in charge of a photo studio project. The goal was to enable NK underground believers to start a photo studio, from which they could earn a living,

share the gospel, and have the opportunity to network with other underground believers. All we needed for a salary was 2 dollars a month for each worker. The cost of taking one color picture would be 10 cents. Even this little money could ensure underground believers a stable life and the opportunity to minister and gather together from time to time.

We connected with passionate Christians in North Korea who had kept their religion for almost a half a century by resisting the NK ideology forced on them.

While most North Korean Christians have been slaughtered over the last fifty years, a few underground believers from the more fortunate families were kicked out to the country side by the NK government. It was one of these groups that Pastor and Mrs. F. and VOM and I connected with for the photo studio project.

They worshipped wisely even though they ran a tremendous risk every moment. They worked to reunite with other scattered believers in order to awaken the NK land with prayer and praising song. They were developing a way to do mission work in North Korea by sharing the gospel with the unsuspecting people who would come to the photo studio. They had video cameras to record their worship and these evangelism efforts so that they could share with you their Christian activity.

One day, we received word from a Korean-Chinese deacon that the underground church believers in Onsung were arrested. The next day the other believers in Heasan and Chungjin who were working with us on this project were arrested as well.

At the same time, this past September 5th, the National State Security Agency of North Korea held a press conference in the Pyongyang Cultural Palace in which they announced that they had arrested spies from a foreign state department as well as spies from North Korea. The NK government showed the confession of someone they claimed was an NK spy, and they showed all of their equipment we had supplied for the photo studio. The arrested people who were accused as spies were our brothers and sisters, underground church believers.

All of the equipment that I had bought and sent to NK thanks to VOM was now being called spy equipment by the NK government. And our brothers and sisters who praised and prayed right under the nose of the totalitarian state were now being prosecuted as spies.

After that news, I flew immediately to the borderline between China and North Korea and spent time in an effort to save even one of these people. I appealed with tears to Pastor and Mrs. F. and asked how we could help these underground Christians who now faced public execution. I cried out in prayer with my workers, but the only news I received was that the situation was hopeless.

In China, I received word of the final prayer prayed by the believer who had been in charge of the project in Chungjin. He prayed, "Lord, please forgive me. All the people got arrested; I can not escape for the sake of only my life. Lord, I will remain and die in order to share your story with the North Korean government."

I found myself blaming God and crying to the Lord who permitted them to be sent to the concentration camp even though he is the sovereign and powerful God. I cried out of vexation and felt like I was going to go crazy as I thought about not being able to see these dear brothers and sisters again. I even wanted to curse Pastor F. who had gotten me involved in ministry in the first place.

After that, I got a phone call from Pastor F. I could not speak. He asked me to open the Bible with him, and he led us in a time of prayer together for the NK underground church believers. I thought, "Pastor, these people are dying now. What does it matter if we pray for them whom no one can save?" When I tried to stop those words from coming out of my mouth, I heard the Word of God coming through the phone.

"But I have prayed for you; that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:32)

I knew immediately that the voice and the message were from God, not from a human being. It was not the voice of an American pastor, but Jesus' voice, and it became my cornerstone. The moment I had complained to the Lord about Him sitting by while others suffered, the Lord came before me and promised, "I am the one who set you on your feet, and I am the one who will guard your faith."

After He carved those words into my mind that day, I was at last born again as a son of God. And I became to share the word of love with NK defectors around me, and I called on them to join me and the brothers and sisters I had known to lay down their lives at the very center of mission work to North Korea.

Now, by the grace of God and through the support and assistance of Voice of the Martyrs, we, the North Korean defectors are in the middle of birth again as the center of NK missions. On one side we are launching flyers written with the word of God on helium balloons. On the other side, we are broadcasting the gospel through the air on short-wave radio into North Korea.

Some people insist that the primary challenge facing North Koreans is that they are starving to death. But I would like to insist that what they need even more is not only bread or milk, but the word of God and songs of holy praise.

The North Korean government has recently built an eternal shrine to Kim Il-sung for \$900,000. They continue to passionately spread propaganda on behalf of Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jung-Il. Despite this, they say they have no money to buy rice for their people?

North Korea threatens the world by making nuclear weapons and shooting missiles like gun salutes, This from a country in which people starve to death in mountains of dead bodies because the government has no money for food?

NK defectors do missions so that we can announce the living God to the prideful North Korean government. We want to expose their idolatry and blanket the land with the only true message of hope and freedom.

Some criticize our sending of gospel flyers through our balloon launches. Some criticize our gospel broadcasting and think it would be better to cancel these efforts and send even one more loaf of bread to North Korea.

The criticism comes not only from the North Korean government as our gospel strategy causes crucial harm to their dictatorship. The criticism also comes from the growing number of young South Koreans who believe the lies announced by North Korea.

But with the assistance and support of VOM and the power of the Holy Spirit, North Korean defector missionaries are beginning to touch the hearts of the North Korean people. North Korean defectors launch gospel flyers into North Korea. We broadcast the Bible, the books of Voice of the Martyrs, and the Gospel story called "He Lived Among Us" into North Korea on short wave radio for a half hour every day. We are the first missionaries to share the good news in the North Korean dialect. People outside of Korea don't realize that there are in fact some significant differences between the North and South Korean dialect. For example, each country uses a different word for God. That is why the North Korean translation of the Bible we use is able to penetrate the hearts of the North Korean people: Because they truly understand it. The translation has been judged by the Korean Bible Society and the United Bible Societies as the most accurate translation of the Bible ever done in the Korean language. But even if the dialect is different, what we share is the same gospel.

There is a major difference in culture between the South Korean and North Korean cultures – an even greater difference than the difference between Russians and Americans. Keep in mind that North and South Koreans have been segregated for the past 60 years and taught to treat each other as bitter enemies.

We North Korean defectors know that the main book VOM produces, "Tortured for Christ", needs to be shared in the North Korean dialect by North Korean defectors with the North Korean people. When North Koreans hear the book in their own heart language on the daily radio broadcast made possible by VOM, its message goes even

deeper than if it were shared in the South Korean dialect by South Korean missionaries. We are so thankful that you have given us this opportunity.

By adding the faith of VOM and Pastor F., our NK mission team composed of North Korean defectors will do our best to let the world to know about the NK government's persecution of underground Christians. And we will be faithful to reach the rest of our country as well.

Literally today, 30,000 flyers with the word of God were launched into NK by balloon. Even at this moment, the gospel radio broadcast you help support, 'The Voice of Freedom', is on the air. The words, "Now you are hearing the gospel broadcasting in the North Korean language through the voice of freedom," are filling the vast empty space of North Korean hearts.

We have gone through the deadly difficult time, from hell to heaven. And through the ministry you have enabled us to have; we have been reborn from slaves into the sons and daughters of God. Each step we NK defectors take is a testimony to the people back in our hometowns.

Pastors, Missionaries, VOM staff, and everyone here!

Please pray for each of the flyers sent to the North Korean people.

Please pray for the daily message sent by short-wave radio broadcasting.

Please pray that God will let the North Korean people who are having such bitter lives come to know the Word of God and the love of God.

And please pray endlessly for Pastor and Mrs. F., VOM, and all of the NK missionaries who live with the mind of sacrifice (like the pain of bone scraping against bone and skin being torn from body) for the sake of dying souls. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.