

September 15, 2020

Dear Prayer Partners,

First, let me update you on the current situation of North Korea.

Kim Jong Un has become every bit as cruel a dictator as his father was

One North Korean refugee slipped back into North Korea in July of this year. He crossed the Imjin river by swimming. Kim Jong Un erupted in anger when he heard of it and ordered reinforcement of the border patrol. He further announced that if the border was breached again, the military and security department heads responsible would be executed.

In August, another North Korean secretly crossed the Tumen River back into North Korea. Since January 21 of this year, several hundred North Koreans involved in trans-border trade have been stranded in China due to the border shut down that Kim Jong Un ordered to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This man who crossed the river could not stay in China any longer. He wanted to come home.

When this man's surreptitious return was discovered and his river crossing known, Kim Jong Un became enraged at the border control failure. Kim then ordered the execution of the military commander in charge of North Korea's Tumen river border, the provincial political officer and the Social Security officer concerned with that stretch of the border, the head of the company the North Korean river-crosser was associated with, and three other individuals.

The executions were carried out in public. It is said that the executions were so horrific that the people could not bear to look. Some witnesses admitted that they wet their pants. When the heavy-caliber weapons firing had ended, the bodies of the condemned were no more than bloody fragments. Other military and government officers in Pyongyang also faced punishment and demotion.

In the beginning of the Kim Jong Un regime, he seemed to show kindness to people and projected an image of a benevolent leader. He made many promises that he would feed people and end hunger in the country. When he went out in public, he might enter an ordinary citizen's home unexpectedly. He was

even said to have carried a frail old soldier on his back. He put on a very good show. However, in the last two years we are seeing exclusively an angry Kim Jong Un. He has become just as his father was. He yells at everyone around him, and capriciously demotes, and kills people. Thus, people are saying that he is revealing his real self, a wantonly cruel dictator.

Flood and big storms hit North Korea

Every summer, floods and storms hit North Korea. This year's ninth typhoon, "Mysak" hit North Hamgyeong Province in early September. More than 1,000 households were affected. Kim replaced the Workers Party chairman of North Hamgyeong Province because of the damage. Can a provincial party chairman prevent a typhoon? Obviously not. The real joke is that some people call Kim Jong Un a god. Yet, he cannot prevent a storm. So he assigned blame for the disaster on someone else rather than let people ponder his own lack of divine power. Yet, he won't permit the country to receive any outside assistance. People continually suffer due to his dictatorial leadership.

What could be next?

Kim Jong Un disappeared for 20 days in April. Many reported that either he was unable to move due to sickness or that he was dead. At the time, many news organizations reported that Kim Yeu Jong would replace her brother. Kim Jong Un came out on May 1st and showed that he was still in control. In early September, there was a rumor that a coup against Kim Jong Un was undertaken by a military group led by his father-in-law. More than 1.5 million people viewed this report on YouTube. Someone sent me the link. I knew immediately this was fake news since the father-in-law was said to be involved in the alleged coup. That could not be possible in North Korea due to its Confucian social roots. Soon enough, the coup report indeed proved to be fake news.

I started to wonder why Kim Jong Un allows these mysterious situations to be created. Does he purposely create it to get attention from the world? If so, 'why?' Is my question. I remember an old Greek Aesop's Fable that I heard when I was young. One young lad was tending sheep. He was bored. So he yelled, "A wolf is coming!!!" The people of the entire village turned out to chase the alleged wolf. At length it turned out to be a joke. Sometime later the young lad did it again. Many villagers came out again to cast out the supposed wolf, but could not find it. Another time however a wolf really did come to take sheep away. As before the boy began to yell, "A wolf is here. Help. Help".

But this time the village adults dismissed his cries and no one responded to his call. Many sheep were eaten and the boy was hurt by the wolf.

Like in this story, maybe Kim Jong Un's reported disappearance next time will garner no response even if in fact he has disappeared permanently. Let us all pray that he will be removed from his position of authority and replaced by someone who fears God.

Is the North Korean market system failing?

To prevent Covid-19, Kim Jong Un ordered the borders closed January 21. Markets were impacted severely. More than 80 percent of the wares in over 800 authorized markets are from China. Some of these were forced to close due to lack of inventory. Many other markets have ceased operation due to average people being unable to pay 3 to 10 times the normal prices. Prices for a wide range of essential goods jumped after the border closing. 1 kg (2.2 pounds) of rice now costs 4,500 won. With this quantity of rice, a family of four may eat 7 oz (200 gram) for each meal, it will be exhausted in five meals. Less than 2 oz per meal are being consumed by a family of four. The reality is that a junior high school teacher receives 4,800 won per month. That teacher can only buy 1kg of rice which will only last five meals. How can a family of four survive?

Let me confuse you more. US dollar to North Korean won is exchanged officially 900 won to a dollar. However, our missionary in the field reported unofficially that one dollar is exchanged in black market for 9,200 won. That means a high school teacher earns a half dollar a month. A senior-rank officer with ten year services in the military receives 8,500 won. How can a teacher's family and the military family survive?

This is why I have asked for support of the underground church and believers in the previous prayer letter. Many of you have responded generously to the immediate needs within the network. A separate report will be sent to those who have provided this support. We were called to bring physical food in addition to spiritual support to those most in need.

Many underground believers still read their bibles

Let me share a story.

"My mother was reading the bible that came with a donation of food twenty years ago. She began to

believe God as she read. Many bibles came with rice, flour, and other foodstuffs during the 1990s. Korean and American missionaries brought bibles to Korean-Chinese churches and distributed these bibles to North Koreans who came originally seeking basic food stuffs. Many North Koreans would spend a night learning the basics of the Faith and return home with bibles in their backpacks. A friend of my mother's reported my mother's reading of the Bible to the Bureau of Social Security. She was detained and tortured at a political prison. I have not seen my mother since. Yet, there are many underground believers still reading the Bible knowing that there will be severe consequences if it is discovered."

"I am taking a risk..."

"When I was in Chosun (the ancient name for Korea still used in the North), I really wanted to read the Bible so much. From my visit in China last time I became God's child. After my return to Chosun, I have been praying quietly but fervently after I put my children to bed. During prayer, I become so frustrated not having a bible to read. I so very much wanted to recite the Word of God. Yet, I did not have a bible and I have not been able to memorize much. So, I desire to take a bible back home with me this time"

As one of our field workers heard the desire of her heart, he slipped a hand-sized bible to her. At that moment, her eyes shone the way a diamond shines when hit by light as she held the little bible. A tear dropped down her cheek, "I wish I can take this tiny bible".

Hearing and seeing this, another North Korean woman who came to study shared her story: "I came here to study the Word of God. The more I studied, I wanted to know more about God. Though I have learned so much in the last few weeks, I do not know enough. It makes me angry not fully understanding the Word. So I am taking a risk by taking this small bible with me when I return to North Korea". She knew what would happen if she were caught with a bible in her possession. Yet, she knew that without it she will feel the same yearning for the Word as she heard from the other lady. She was frustrated not having a bible.

It is moments like these when a missionary feels, "Yes, God. Thank you for using me to bring these bibles here"

So, the two women embraced each other and began to pray for their safe return. Then, the prayer changed into a crying, not because they are sad or afraid, but because they are so happy to have their own bibles to take back with them to North Korea. How would you respond to this situation? Knowing

the possible dire consequences, yet, many still seek to obtain their own copy of the Bible. As each receives a bible, we notice hands are shaking both because it is so precious, and because of knowing the consequence of possessing a bible.

In addition, you may click on "media" to see the latest story video we have produced. "A Book like a Jewel" is about bible delivery in dangerous circumstances under our newly modified web, www.cornerstoneusa.org for continual prayer. Or you may go to YouTube link: https://youtu.be/1ewwlm_FzH8 to watch this video.

We are deeply thankful to those who have given their hearts and support to make possible the bibles for the women to take back home. And I would like to ask you to pray continually and fervently to protect His people who are reading His Word underground.

Yours in His love,

Isaac + Peter

Isaac and Peter

