

Cornerstone Ministries

It amazes me how much they want to praise Him, but cannot in public. They share the Gospel even with the feared Social Security Bureau people. Yet, the restrictions are so great that it is hard to imagine and describe their faith. Nonetheless, His church is continuing to expand rapidly. With the rapid growth comes great risk. Church leaders are frequently captured and go through inhuman torture during interrogation. I cannot describe the pain they are put through. I received the following letter a few years ago and keep it in my drawer. I read it every time I feel lost and discouraged in this work. This letter reminds me that no matter how difficult it may seem to me to take up the Cross daily, North Korean believers willingly offer a greater sacrifice to the Lord.

This month again I reread this letter to join my persecuted brothers and sisters in their suffering and persecution. Let me share a portion of this letter, written by a sister in Christ who was tortured, for His name sake for three years and then released.

Among the torture, one of the most difficult was when a North Korean official forced me to bow and hold my body at 90 degrees for two weeks because I would not deny God in front of him. They did not allow me to rest or sleep and I had to remain in that deep bow even while eating. They kept me from sleep by handcuffing my arms to the prison cell bars up above in my 90 degrees posture.

They hit me on the head with their metal bars until I bled. The beatings were continuous for days. They screamed at me that I did not tell them what they wanted to hear. Then they brought me in front of all the prisoners and after covering me with a blanket, they had the prisoners beat me with all of their strength. My front teeth were broken and my whole body was bruised. The guards were not happy seeing me still alive after that beating so they had the prisoners lift me up five feet in the air and drop me to the ground, not once, but maybe ten times. They didn't stop until I had three broken ribs. Another day they beat me with an axe handle and broke my arm. I could not use my arms for three months. They sat me next to a hot coal burner for three hours so that my skin would burn. They made me clear out the toilets with my hands. The guards were incensed because I was diligent in my duty, so they made me clean the toilets by licking them with my tongue for three days. It became too much. When I could not place my tongue in the filth immediately, they bashed my head against the wall until I was all bloody. That wasn't enough for them. They called the other prisoners to bash my head against the wall. The concussion made me lose consciousness for 10 days. They passed on to electrocution, after which I would faint for many hours.

After their initial torturing stage they placed me into a labor camp to work with other prisoners. I was assigned to cut 15 trees a day with an axe. Each tree was 60 centimeters (approximately 24 inches) in diameter. It was an impossible task. I was punished for every failure. Then I was assigned to plow and take out weeds in 1.2 acre of land in one day. Not even a strong farmer with all the right equipment and tools can do these tasks. I was not only beaten but forfeited my meals for not finishing my tasks. Then, at the end of the day, those who failed were made to pull very heavy logs from one end of the yard to the other. Even an ox would have difficulty pulling these trees. I was so beaten from my initial torture that I could not even walk yet alone carry logs. After extreme physical torture and deprived of food, I failed to complete my task and was given more physical labor in my exhausted state.

When they decided I was no use in the farm, they placed me in a concrete cell dressed only in a pair of underwear. The temperature was below freezing. Finding me still alive after days, they made me strip and crawl across a frozen rice paddy. The stubble tore my body and I broke through the ice many times. Then they made me stand at attention in the cold wind for an hour. My body was covered with a thin glazing of ice just like a frozen fish. I was so hungry that when I saw corn in the cow's dung, I picked the corn from the feces and ate it.

Despite what I went through, the greatest torture of all was being forced to sleep face down to the floor so that I could not look up at my God in heaven and that I was not allowed to callout "Hananim" (God).

What a confession! In midst of the cruel torture, her desire was to praise God. She suffered most by not being able to call upon Him. Every time I read this letter I wonder what I would do in such a situation. This believer spent three years in prison and was only able to come out when God favored her. She is bold to confess that she will give her whole life to bring the nation of North Korea to recognize God and so that His grace may be proclaimed. These letters show that our Christian brothers and sisters have not lost their faith or their courage in Jesus Christ. I realized how weak I was, being discouraged after only 25 years of work, when I could not see or hear of any results taking place in dark North Korea. God opened my eyes to see the precious blessing mentioned in Matthew 5: 10, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."