

Won-pil Kim Remembers the Early Days of the Unification Church - Part 4

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Whenever we found a place to spend the night, it was my task to make a fire to warm the floor for sleeping. (Korean houses have a heating system under the floor.) One night I could find nothing to use for fuel, not even dried grass. Finally, I saw a small tomb and beside it a stretcher made of straw, supported by two poles. I brought the poles and started a fire with them, realizing later that the stretcher had probably been used to carry a corpse. The three of us were extremely tired, and even though the floor was cold, Father and Mr. Pak [Chung Hwa Pak] lay down, while I tended the fire. Suddenly Father called out to me, asking what kind of wood I was burning. I explained in detail how I had looked everywhere for fuel, to no avail, until I found the poles on the hill near the grave. Then Father told me that not all wood is meant to be used as firewood. Even though he was in another room, he knew what I had been doing.

The following day, we came to an abandoned house where many other refugees had sought shelter for the night. After I cooked some food and we ate, we were sitting there enjoying the warmth. Sleepiness descended on us like a lead weight. Mr. Pak and I both asked Father at the same time if we could spend the night there. Usually he would say yes, but that night he replied that we had better move on. Several times we repeated the question, asking if we couldn't rest there and start again in the morning. After the first refusal, Father didn't respond. He stood up and said we had better be going.

The last group to cross the Imjin River

It was very cold, dark and windy that night, but Father said we had to continue on. So we followed him, and walked on for a long time until he decided to rest.

Early the next morning, we faced our last major challenge in our path to Seoul: the Imjin River. (The Imjin River joins the Han River just before they enter the sea. This frozen river was a strategic point for fortification against the armies advancing from the north.) We heard the sounds of an air battle overhead. If the enemy troops could cross the river, they could easily attack Seoul. On the other side, the UN troops were constructing defensive positions. Because a battle was imminent, it was decided that day to allow no more refugees to cross the river.

We saw many people crossing the ice, and we followed them to the other bank. Just after we arrived, the barricade was completed, and we were among the very last few people able to leave the north. Then I knew why Father had not given in to our pleadings the night before. If we had remained in that house, we would have been kept out by the barricade.

Spiritualists often tell people, "This is a revelation from God," and people can easily follow their

instructions. But Father didn't say anything about receiving a revelation that the river would be barricaded. He just spoke in a natural way. From such experiences, I realize how important it is to attend and serve Father. I try never to let my attendance become simply habitual. Sometimes I am fearful of what Father says. If he says something, I cannot take it lightly.



The ancient Moongyeong Gate, now preserved as a national historic site.

Christmas in Seoul

We had left Pyongyang on December 4 and arrived completely exhausted in Seoul on Christmas Eve. "I stayed in Seoul when I was young," Father explained to us, "so I have many friends here, friends in faith." He said this to encourage and comfort us. Then Father began searching for his friends. We located the home of one friend, but he had already escaped, together with his entire family. We spent the night in his empty house.

Not only our strength, but all our food as well was exhausted. I went out looking for something we could eat. I had to find something, somewhere, for Father and Mr. Pak. I visited several houses, but all were vacant. Although they were locked, I found some way to enter and look around. I was searching for rice. Finally, in one house, I found a little bag with rice inside it. Filled with happiness, I brought it back and prepared dinner.

"Where did you get this?" Father wanted to know. When I explained, Father taught me, "If you take something from somebody, you should determine to return to him three times as much as what you took. If you make this internal condition, you may take the food, but still you should try to give it back substantially at some point."

Later on, I looked for the house in order to repay the people. However, that Christmas was my first visit to Seoul, and I could no longer remember which house it was; not knowing the owners' names, I couldn't go around and ask for them. Since it was impossible to return the rice to those from whom I had borrowed it, I gave rice to some very needy people in their stead.

Father once explained that whereas in the fallen world pickpockets take money from people, in the heavenly world, people will sneak money into the pockets of others. Fallen world people steal, but heavenly-world people give to those who need help. Thus, in the heavenly world, if we lock our doors, we are preventing someone from coming in to leave us something!

According to Father, we shouldn't wait for the heavenly kingdom to arrive before putting this into practice. As part of the process of kingdom-building, we ourselves have to begin doing these things. If we help each other, the spirit world multiplies the good deeds. In this way, the influence of good will spread, and the heavenly kingdom will gradually come about.

The Red Chinese and North Korean armies were continuing their advance, and soon the residents of Seoul were asked to evacuate the city and head further south. (Seoul again fell to communist forces on January 4.)

Obtaining identification

On our journey, the farther south we went, the more frequently we were asked for identification. Even in

small villages, village patrols had been organized, and people carried cards showing that they were residents of the village. These patrols sometimes punished or tortured those who arrived without identification. Thus, some refugees who had escaped safely from North Korea were killed by these self-defense units. And until we reached Seoul, we had had no opportunity to obtain identification.

Since there was a shortage of soldiers, the government was also forming volunteer army units made up of refugees. In the part of Seoul where we were staying, such a group was being rounded up. Mr. Pak was excused, since he had a broken leg; I met the qualifications and was asked to go to the police station and line up for the health examination. But people were suspicious of Father, because his hair was still very short, from his prison days, and he was taken off to the police station for interrogation. Thus, we were separated.

Father spent a sleepless night at the police station, and the following morning he was interrogated again. Thinking this might be my last chance to see Father, I went to look for him.

I asked Father, "If I cannot see you any more, how can I continue? How can I maintain faith? What can I do by myself? Please give me advice."

"Follow your mind, your original mind," Father replied. Father said I would receive guidance from my original mind and that I should direct my life according to it. I really did not want to be separated from Father, so finally I introduced him to a policeman, explaining that he was my teacher, my master. I told how Father had been imprisoned in Hungnam and then was liberated, and how we were making our journey south.

The policeman looked at me suspiciously, thinking that I was a woman dressed as a man. He imagined that Father was my husband and that he had made me pretend to be a man in order to escape to the South. So out of my explanation, the police concocted a totally different story. He called me into a private room, wanting to see whether I was really a man. He asked me to take off my shirt, and his doubts were resolved. No longer suspicious of Father, he released him.

After that, Father also had to apply for the volunteer army. The first step was the health examination. The soldiers said that those who had a disease should line up separately. Neither Father nor I looked sick, but Father joined that group and called me over to join him.

I did not have the confidence to join that line. I had seen one man with a badly injured eye, who protested that he could not fight. But the soldiers replied, "Even though you have one eye, you have your whole body, hands and legs. So you can fight." They took him into the army. Another person said he had hemorrhoids, and the soldier said, "Even though you suffer with this disease, you still have your hands. It's okay. You pass."

Then I recalled an accident that happened while I had been in prison, whereby I fell off a roof and hurt my backbone.

Ever since, I have had pain in my backbone. So I prepared to explain this condition. Father was called in to be questioned. I couldn't hear what he told them, but the soldiers finally said he was disqualified. Then it was my turn. Afraid of being separated from Father, my heart was filled with anxiety. Maybe if you were in my position, you would have thought first about Father's situation. You would have been very happy to see Father disqualified as a soldier. But at the time, I didn't think about Father first. I explained my situation to the soldiers, and strangely enough, they disqualified me, too.

Thus, Father and I received certificates of disqualification. If people left without receiving those papers, they would be examined again later. For the first time since coming south, we had a chance to get some kind of identification.

"Let's go to the police office and get our certification as refugees," Father said. We needed a witness to testify to us and identify us. An acquaintance of Father, a middle-aged woman, came and identified us. Because of her help, we were finally able to get identification cards. With these cards, we were able to pass through many situations very smoothly.