

## History of the Seoul Church – Part 3

Won Pil Kim

September 1982

Republished by FFWPU International Headquarters on October 27, 2020



### Seodaemun Prison course

Father was arrested on the charge of violating the conscription regulations. I was arrested for violating the law of the armed service. Ehwa University was supported by the Methodist Church, and its president was a very intimate friend of the wife of Korean President Syngman Rhee, and she began using her connections to persecute our Unification Church. Utilizing her connections with the Foreign Ministry and the Education Ministry, she tried to influence the mass media and cause us to be persecuted. Other Christian churches joined her in persecuting the Unification Church. One of the main newspapers in Korea, the Tong-A (Daily News) wrote rather positive articles about the Unification Church in the beginning. They wrote that the attitude of the university authorities was wrong. Later, because of governmental pressures and influence of mass media, they changed their tone.

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Father was taken to jail first, and the next day I was put into jail, and later other members were arrested and placed in the cell next to mine. We did not know about the rules of the prison, so when the members who had just come saw me they were so happy that, without getting permission from the guard, they gave me some of the food they had brought.

Father, who had experienced prison before, worried about this. Later when we were transferred into Seodaemun Prison [Editor's note: Seodaemun is the name of a district of Western Seoul], we were placed in separate cells and were not permitted to talk to each other.

Before being sent to jail, Father had given us very clear, concise advice on how to act in prison. We were arrested for the same reasons, for being part of the same group, so the guards did not want us staying in the same cells. We were each assigned a number. When the prosecutor or inspector called for us, he called for us by number, not by name. In the morning numbers are usually called out for the prisoners who were supposed to appear for interrogation. So Father told us to remember each other's numbers very carefully. So we memorized our number the other members' numbers. Even though we were placed in separate cells, when numbers were called out, we would know what was happening to other members.

Mr. Eu and Father were put into different, but adjoining cells. So when Father received food or other provisions from outside, he passed all of it to Mr. Eu. I heard that, during those days in prison, Mr. Eu loved Father very deeply, almost like the devotion of a wife for her husband. The guard observed such a beautiful relationship between Mr. Eu and Father. He was so deeply moved by it that after Father was

freed, he came to visit Father at the church.



*Seodaemun prison*

### **Life in the prison**

There were two long buildings facing each other, with a courtyard between for exercising the prisoners. There were cells on both sides of the hallways. Father was placed in one room and Mr. Eu in the adjoining cell.

There were four or five prisoners per cell, sometimes six. Prisoners slept in the narrow rooms with their feet towards the center, and their heads toward the side walls.

Across the narrow hallway, I could see cells of the other two members. We could see each other through the doors. Across the exercise yard, I could see the window of Father's cell.

In prison it was prohibited to talk to each other, but when Father wanted to tell me something, he would shout it to me through the window. "Mr. Eu was released today," he shouted one day. With a loud voice, he would give me information about the members, even though talking was prohibited. His attitude was really courageous, for ordinary prisoners never did such a thing.

Each cell had a tiny window, and through this I could see Father and Mr. Eu, maybe 60 feet away. The window was high, so if I just stood up, I couldn't really see Father, so I would climb on top of the toilet. Prison toilets are not like toilets now; rather it was just a round ceramic container, sitting on the floor. There was a cover, a square which fit over the top, so it was this cover I could stand on and see Father through the iron bars of the window.

There were guards at each corner of the building, patrolling the grounds. Twice a day, morning and evening, I was able to greet Father. There was a scheduled waking hour, but I would get up before that time. Looking over to Father's cell, I could see that he was already up, doing some kind of exercise. I would bow to Father, and when he saw it, he would bow to me. When nighttime came, I would again stand on the toilet and bow and greet Father. At the same time, I could see Mr. Eu next to Father, and I would greet him and bow to him as well. This was our daily life in prison.

The reason I am telling you this is because I could gain energy by greeting Father twice a day. After being released from prison, I reflected on prison life and realized that for Father it must have been somewhat difficult to receive bows from me under those circumstances. You might wonder why it was difficult for him, but try putting yourself in his situation, imagining that you are the leader and I am your member. Suppose I greet you twice a day, at 5:00 am and 11:00 pm. You might think it is not so difficult to receive the greetings of a member twice a day. But in order to receive this greeting from the member, you have to wake up before he comes, dress, and prepare yourself to receive his greetings. Sometimes you might feel tired before 11:00, but you know he will come at 11:00, so you cannot go to bed. You know he will come regularly at 5:00, so you must wake up before 5:00. You might have many worries inside of you, but

because the member comes regularly and greets you, you cannot show this member a worried face. If this happened just once a week or once a month, you could take it, but if it is repeated every day, how would you feel? Even to wake up at 5:00 a.m. once a week is not so easy, but if it continues every day ...

After being set free from prison, I recognized that it is more difficult to receive the bow of greeting than to make the bow. Sometimes Father must have been tired and exhausted, but he was always concerned first about the members, so he always woke up before me and prepared to greet me.



*Prison cells at Seodaemun prison*

### **Reflecting on the conclusion of that time**

When Father was in Hungnam he did morning exercises and massaged his body with a cold towel, so I tried to practice this method in my prison experience. But in order to do that, I had to wake up before the other people woke up. I tried to massage myself with a wet towel, but this action makes a big sound. If you don't believe it, try it some morning. When people are sleeping, when the room is very quiet, it makes a big noise. Also the guards pace the hallways regularly and observe what the prisoners are doing through the windows. So when the guard approached my cell, I had to quickly get into the bed and pretend I was sleeping. Through my own experience in prison, I could imagine how difficult his life must have been in Hungnam.

The prisoners who had been sentenced were often people who had lied about their age when they escaped from the North. People who were young enough were conscripted for military duty, so many people reported an older age. Even older people were sometimes called up for military service and formed into special groups. For this reason, people sometimes lied about their age. Mr. Eu had polio in his legs, so because of his physical condition he would have been exempted from military duty. The other members were too old for conscription, but I was not. For that reason, they were released and I was not. That was why I was sentenced.

After about three months, on October 4, Father was declared innocent and set free, along with the other three members. But I was sentenced and I had to continue my prison life alone. Father really worried about me, and he himself came to visit me in prison. He saw my situation in prison, and after that I received a really great blessing: one month after his visit, I was set free. It was on December 25, 1955. Just a bit after midnight, Father came to prison with the other members and offered a Christmas prayer for the other prisoners as well.

As you have already experienced, when people write negative articles, the newspapers really sensationalize them and play them up. But when there are good articles reporting on good events, they are downplayed. For instance, when Father was declared innocent and released from prison, this news appeared in small print in the back pages of the newspapers.

In Pyongyang, people joined because of many spiritual experiences; there was not even a written version of the Principle at that time. However, when Father was imprisoned, one by one, they left – not because they didn't like the church, but because they could not endure the opposition from their families and other people. They liked the church but it was difficult to find people who could really care for them.

However, in 1955 in Seoul, even though members suffered really severe persecution, their faith became stronger and stronger. They did not leave the church, but they stayed and endured the persecution.

When Father was released from prison, he moved to the Cheongpa Dong Church in Seoul and began to settle down there. From that time on, our church began to develop very rapidly. Many important people joined. From 1957 on, witnessing became very active, and our church was organized well.

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