

True Mother Kang Hyun Shil

Rev Chu Ki-Chol, a Korean Christian Martyr

April 24, 2017

Bible reading: Matthew 5:11-12 (KJV)

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Good morning everyone,

Today I would like to speak about Rev Chu Ki-Chol, a minister who refused to worship at the Shinto shrines which was required by the Japanese colonial authorities during the occupation prior to 1945.

During the Japanese occupation of Korea, until 1945, there were many people who refused to worship at Shinto shrines, as required by the colonial authorities. Among those people Rev. Chu Ki-Chol was pretty famous. He was born in the South Eastern part of the Korean peninsula, one of four sons to a man who was a lay leader in a Christian Church.

He was not quite able to finish his schooling. He attended a Christian revival one day and he was so moved that he decided to become a revivalist, and he attended seminary in Pyongyang in what is today North Korea. He graduated from Yonhi Middle School in the nineteenth class. He became a minister in a number of churches: the Cheolang Church which was actually located right in front of our church, and he did pastoral work in Masan and in Pyongyang as well.

In 1936 the Christian community in Korea was very deeply divided over the question whether to obey the demands of the colonial government to worship at Shinto shrines or not. Around that time Rev. Chu was pastor at the Cheolang Church. He submitted a motion to his bishop conference refusing submission to the demand for worship at the Shinto shrines. The local newspaper – the Pusan newspaper- carried this as a big story and it became quite controversial.

The debate in the Christian community was, “Is it a sin for Christians to worship at Shinto shrines?” There were a lot of debates and one church community in the Northern part of the peninsula first declared in 1938 that they would not do that. This community in Northern Korea voted in their conference saying that Christians must not go to Shinto shrines.

Rev. Chu was arrested by the authorities for his insistence that Christians not go, but the motion passed in the South part of Korea as well, even without his presence, and he was never indicted. They released him after this motion passed but later on the police arrested him again.

His wife, Oh, Jong-Mo, was also a person of very strong faith, and she said to him, "Please continue to fight; fight to the end! Be victorious and come out of jail as a victor!"

The major debate was held at the Sanjunghyun Church in Pyongyang; there was a very heated debate at that church over this issue. The police had to go there to keep order and someone spoke about that situation.

A Japanese policeman named Shimizu actually gave a lecture saying that it was not a sin for Christians to worship at the shrines, but then Rev. Chu stood up and argued against this Japanese man. He voiced, "I am impressed by your knowledge but I cannot sit here and allow you to tell us that the Bible can be quoted as saying that we should not worry about worshipping at Shinto shrines." He spoke very forcefully against the Japanese, and from that time he became known as a dissident.

The Japanese man insisted that it was not a sin but he was embarrassed to say so and the audience was very impressed by what Rev. Chu said. It was a very tense situation for the Japanese police to control.

Then there was a minister whose name was Rev. Yoo, Jae-Gi; in July 1939, he had been arrested in another instance and he was released after seven months. When he first appeared at his church after his release it was filled with Christian believers. The Japanese police surrounded the church- in fact the policemen surrounded the church in several layers- and the Japanese police also went into the church and caused trouble.

Rev. Chu was the senior pastor at that church at the time and he insisted that if they arrested someone they must be given clemency within three months. He made a deal with the Japanese that if they would give clemency within three months he would not oppose the worship at the Shinto shrine.

But Rev. Chu though, eventually was not influenced by this because he chose to oppose the Shinto shrine worship to the end. The police told him to not preach any more from that day on. Rev. Chu responded, "I give sermons by God's authority; God is the One who has given me this authority and you are out of line to think that you can tell me whether or not I am authorized to give sermons. So I will continue to give these sermons as long as God authorizes me to do so."

At that point he had a big argument with the Japanese policeman. The police threatened that if Rev. Chu gave a sermon they would put him under arrest. Rev. Chu replied, "It's my responsibility to give sermons, so I will do that and you can do whatever you need to do; if you want to arrest me go ahead."

He added, "I am just doing what I am supposed to do." So there was a big fight. The policeman told him, "If you disobey an order given to you by a police officer of the great Japanese empire you will have to go directly to jail from here." Rev. Chu responded, "Under the Japanese constitution we have the freedom to worship. So right now you are disrupting this worship service, therefore you are going against your own constitution." He spoke so forcefully that the Japanese policeman had to back down.

The person could tell by looking at Rev. Chu then that he had the determination of steel and he would not bend to anyone; so the one who faced him knew that he would have to be the one to retreat.

Rev. Chu with his white robe climbed to the podium and began the worship service. He read from Matthew 5: 11-12 as we just did:

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He proclaimed, "The Living God is standing here next to me," and he explained the five points of his sermon.

The sanctuary was filled to the point that there was no place for people to get in, and it was a very tense atmosphere. He beseeched God, "Help us to overcome the power of death!" He prayed for wisdom and that they could endure the persecution of Satan. He entreated God to allow him to live for the sake of righteousness and also to die for the sake of righteousness. And he offered, "God I give you my soul, so please do as you wish with it!"

The police was not able to arrest him right then because the atmosphere was so tense, but they did take him into custody a few days later and he went to jail. Before they took him away he told the police, "I have one last request. I have an old mother who is about eighty years old, and I would like to say goodbye to her." He went into his mother's room, and he prayed there asking God to take care of her during his absence.

He was taken to the Pyongyang police station and he was kept in jail there for a total of seven years. During his seven years in jail he prayed, he gave sermons and he sang hymns. Even though the police tried to forbid him and to stop him from doing that he continued to do so.

He would tell the police, "It's my job to give sermons, that's what I do; and it's your job to arrest people. So you can do what you do, but I am not going to stop from doing what I am doing."

The torture was so severe that several times he fainted and at times he was on the verge of death. When he fainted, the police poured water on him in order to wake him up. Sometimes

they would put red peppers in the water, and basically he would almost be in a state of unconsciousness. That happened several times.

When he was on the verge of death, he would sometimes be taken out; they would treat him and bring him back to torture him some more. During that time he would preach and also pray to God, "My soul is in your hand; please do as You will with it!"

Rev. Chu is very well known in the Christian Church even today, and the people respect him very highly. He gave courage; he inspired people to resist the Japanese effort to make all Koreans worship at Shinto shrines.

Whether he prayed or was singing hymns or giving sermons he was always shedding tears. He stated, "Jesus died not for himself but for the nation and for the world but I am not able to do that, so I am not worthy!"

Stories about Rev. Chu have been told among Christians for many years. He had a very difficult cross to bear when he was in prison but he would express, "My cross is nothing compared to the cross that Jesus bore on Golgotha," and no matter what happened, he would always take courage and have hope and he was finally able to gain victory over that situation.

Sometimes he would ask the people torturing him, "How are you going to receive the punishment for what you are doing to me now? How is it that you can torture me this way and laugh and make jokes about it?" And perhaps they had a conscience too, because when he said that they would sometimes stop torturing him for awhile and come back later to continue the torture.

By the time he was released from prison he was very weak. He had poor eyesight and his lungs and heart were bad; he was in a very poor health. But during all that time in prison, he always had gratitude. He always praised God for whatever happened. He was always grateful! In prison he would often sing the hymn, "I am pressing on the upward way... to higher ground." He was fired as a minister, so during his time in prison his family had to move out of the parsonage and they had no place to go.

He finally passed away in 1944, a year before Korea was liberated; he was forty seven years old at the time. When he prayed, he would declare, "It is God that has called me; it is God who lives with me now, and it is God who calls me to the spirit world when I go there!" And he asked that God would help him to remain constant and never change. When he gave his final prayer before death, it was so forceful that the entire house shook.

He is a person who truly fought for the sake of righteousness. For seven years he fought a difficult battle, and he carried the cross with the heart of carrying the cross along with Jesus. He is truly a brave warrior of Christianity. He is a martyr of Korean Christianity whom Korean Christians can take pride in before the world.

In prison he would often remark, "It would not be so difficult to experience death because that it is a very temporary and a very quick thing, but what is more difficult is to be dying day after day."

Last night I was reminded of Rev. Chu, and I pondered on how many great Christian martyrs there are in Korea: people who really loved God and fought for Him with all their heart, all their mind, and who really gave their lives for the sake of God's providence.

I pray that thanks to these martyrs God will protect Korea, and that it will not be destroyed. Father praised Rev. Chu and other Korean martyrs. I remember Father asserting that a strong church would be built on the foundation of their sacrifice.

Of course I have always respected him. The reason I speak of him today is that I know that if he is in the spiritual world now, if he knows the true will of God, then he would certainly be standing on Father's side, and he would be working alongside with Father to protect Korea and to accomplish God's will on this earth.

When we talk about martyrdom today people laugh. They say, "Well this is something that happened a long time ago." But I don't agree with that. I think it is thanks to those martyrs that we are able to have such a strong Christian church in Korea today and I know that this church will not be destroyed.

Right now there is just one ember remaining in the fire of Christianity and that is with the 2nd King who was blessed by our True Father. We now need to work with the 2nd King, so that we do not disappoint Father, so that we do not disappoint the 2nd King, and so we finally hoist the flag of victory and we sing praises, and the song of victory.

Thank you very much,

Video Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLIJs_jAwDU