

My Time with Father in the Hungnam Labor Camp - Part 1

Chung Hwa Pak
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Mr. Chung Hwa Pak first met Father when they were both prisoners in Hungnam labor camp in North Korea. He is well-known to us as the person whom Father helped travel south together after they were liberated (1950) -- the man whose leg had been broken and whom Father pushed on the bicycle. We remember that Mr. Pak later left the church and rejoined at various times during his life. What may be less well remembered is that Mr. Pak was one of the earliest people to recognize and follow Father on the basis of revelation from the spirit world. Despite his struggles to stay the course, he was a humble and prepared person. His testimony here, in his own words, gives much insight into True Father's own early life course.

I was born on the 7th day of the 12th month (by the lunar calendar) in 1913. I had one older and two younger sisters. We lived in a village just outside Pyongyang. I went to Pyongyang Sungshil Junior High School, a Christian school, and later studied at Shinkyung Junior Industrial College in Manchuria. My father was a wealthy landowner. I was married when I was 14 (by Korean reckoning). My wife was 19. I was the only son and it was customary then for the son to marry young so that the grandparents could see their grandson's children before they died. My first child was born when I was 18. I had one daughter and four sons.

When I left college I got a job in an electrical company. Later I was drafted into the Japanese Army as a second lieutenant. In August 1945, when Korea was liberated from the Japanese the country was in confusion. At that time, I was a special policeman at Pyongyang train station, checking weapons coming from Manchuria. In January 1947 my group came under the control of the North Korean Home Affairs Ministry. In December I was appointed as a military police captain at Haeju, in Hwanghae Province. Shortly afterwards I was promoted to lieutenant colonel and made commander a place called Sariwon. At that time the communists were checking high-ranking army officers. I think I was listed as a Christian (because of my school) and as the son of a rich man.



Kim Il-Sung, who was installed as the leader of North Korea in October 1945

In January 1948 the captain of the military police in the town of Sinmag, one Captain Ho Jung, was arrested for helping South Korean merchants take their merchandise to the South (the border had not yet been sealed). I was also arrested because the Sinmag military police were under my command. Captain Ho was sentenced to 10 years in prison and myself 3 years. I was sentenced not only for failing to control my command, but also for disobeying orders (I had engaged my men in skirmishes near the 38th parallel without waiting for orders from above) and for not doing my job "satisfactorily." When Kim Il-Sung became president of the newly-formed Democratic People's Republic of (North) Korea in 1948, all prison sentences were halved. So my sentence was reduced to 18 months. Father's term was reduced from five to three years under the amnesty.

Daily Schedule in Hungnam Prison

Hungnam Special Prison Camp was hell. There were about 1500 prisoners. I was 37 years old (by Korean reckoning) and in good health when I was sent there. After one week I became weak, after two weeks I was feeble. My hands bled with the work of bagging fertilizer and my feet bled because I had no shoes.

There were 40 prisoners to a room. Each room was about 6 meters by 6 meters. We slept toe to toe. There were different kinds of work: bagging fertilizer, carrying the bags, metalworking. The easiest work was in the canteen. For food we had chapgok (boiled grain) and miyok (brown seaweed) soup. The miyok was uncooked. Every morning there was a line-up to check the prisoners. Then we walked to the site where we worked eight hours a day. When we returned the four kilometers to the hut after work. I was so hungry I couldn't sleep. Because of our history, in Korea we have a saying that when our parents die, it is sad, and when our children and spouse die, it is sad; but the worst thing is to be hungry.

Once a month we were allowed outside visitors. Usually they brought us misu-karu (rice powder), because it would last a while. When one of the prisoners in our crowded hut got some, I couldn't sleep, knowing it was there. Many times I thought of stealing other people's misu-karu. Then I thought, "I am a leader in

society, how can I think of such a thing?” At lunchtime, the prisoners lined up and were given one radish. The food was the same but the size of the radishes varied. When I saw someone else had a bigger one than mine, I felt such pain because I was so hungry. All day I couldn’t get the thought of it out of my mind.



Each work group had to do between 1200 and 1500 bags a day. For ten days I worked under a group leader, one Nam Su Kim. I’d never done manual labor like that before, so Mr. Kim gave me the job of holding open the sacks while two others shoveled in the fertilizer. I couldn’t even do that properly so he put me on tying up the sacks. I couldn’t do that either.

One day a young man watched me and then began to help me. He did his own work and then helped me finish mine. In ten days I learned how to tie bags. At that time, we didn’t talk so much, but with the young man I felt we understood each other without having to talk. That was how I met Father. The 1500 prisoners were divided into groups of ten. Each group had a leader whose job it was to keep the nine working. Ten groups made up a larger unit with a leader. This unit leader didn’t work. He just watched the others. Of the 15 unit leaders there was one overall leader. The leader at that time finished his sentence and was released. One day the camp director summoned me, prisoner no. 919.

The director asked me to take the position of the released leader. I hesitated to accept, thinking of that young man (Father) who had helped me, and asked the director to give me two days to make a decision. The next day I talked to the young man and asked him whether I should accept the position or not. He replied, “There is a special meaning behind this, so please accept it.”

The next day I told the director, “I accept.” I was introduced to all the prisoners at the morning line-up. The director ordered them to obey me as they obeyed him.



The Hungnam Nitrogen Fertilizer Plant was a key revenue earner for the North Korean war effort. It was here that Father and Jun Hwa Pak worked every day to work.

A Visitation

That night I couldn’t sleep. An old man in white traditional Korean costume appeared to me. He shook me, “Chung Hwa, Chung Hwa. Do you know who that man is who helped you for those few days?” I said I didn’t know. Then the old man clearly told me, “That young man is the one you’ve been looking for since your childhood. He is the Messiah.” (I was baptized as a child and had been a deacon in Somunbak Church in Pyongyang.)

“Jesus said why do you look at me? I’ll come back as you saw me go. That man is the one,” the old man said. I couldn’t sleep for two days. “If he’s the Returning Lord, why is he here in this camp?” I wondered. I couldn’t understand.

Two days after becoming the leader of all the prisoners, I started working with them again. The reason was that I wanted to be together with that young man and watch him. My whole attention was focused on him, watching him, listening when he said anything.

When the camp director was addressing all the prisoners at the morning assembly, I sat behind the young man. He turned around and said to me, “Chung Hwa, you had a dream two nights ago, didn’t you?” I was shocked. I remember that moment so well. So much has happened since that time, but then, I clearly said to him, “You are the Messiah.”

As the leader I had the privilege of assigning jobs. Also I had to make sure people didn’t escape. I no longer had to do manual work and I wanted to give easy work to Father so I could be near him; but he refused, telling me, “I didn’t come here because of my sin, but I must fulfill my mission.” I continuously asked him to take easy work so that I would have time to talk with him. Finally, he accepted. He finished work in the morning so we could talk in the afternoon. First he taught me about John the Baptist’s failure, but I disagreed with him. What he said made me angry. “Why did he fail?” I protested. “In the Bible it says when he baptized Jesus that the dove descended, and he testified.”

That night I couldn’t sleep. I had pain in my body. Also, that old man appeared again and said, “The reason you’re in pain is because you’re not following him.”

The next day I told Father, “I’ll surrender everything to you.” He smiled and said, “Of course, you must do so in order to have much happiness in the future.”

One day I protested again when he told me about the private life of Jesus and the cross. I clearly remember that moment. Father told me about Mary and Jesus at the wedding party when Jesus said, “What do you have to do with me?” He tried to make me understand. But I had a fixed idea of Christianity. I got angry and said, “What are you talking about?” and I walked away from him.

That night I couldn’t sleep at all. I had such a pain, both in my spirit and my body. The next day I apologized to him and swore, “I’ll never run away from you. I’ll listen and follow whatever you teach me,” That night the old man appeared and said, “From now on you follow him. Don’t doubt him anymore.” Then I felt better.

I was 7 years older than Father, but after that I called him Seongsaeng-nim(Teacher) and he called me Chung Hwa-ya just like he would call his own son.



Workers at the Hungnam Fertilizer Plant during the 1930s (when it was run by a Japanese company)

Father’s Followers in Prison

Many people had visions and dreams and followed Father in the prison camp. I asked the 15 group leaders to work together to follow Father. One disciple was Won Dok Kim. He had graduated from Japanese Military Academy and was a major in the North Korean Army. He was one of the country's intelligentsia. He worked as a special secretary for a high-ranking officer names General Mu Jong.

It was when General Mu was on a trip to China that North Korean intelligence officials discovered that Major Kim, who was not a communist, had connections with South Korean officials. He was sentenced to death and was in Hungnam awaiting his sentence.

One night an old man appeared in his dream and led him to a huge stairway. They climbed up to the top where a man was seated on a throne. The light was so bright that he couldn't look up at the man's face. He felt so low compared to the man on the throne.

When he woke up he wondered what it all meant. The next day his deceased father appeared to him and the same thing happened. This time he could see the man's face. His father said, "If you follow this man and stay with him you will not die."

After his father said that, he woke up. He was more curious about the man at the top of the stairway. After a few days he was moved to another cell. Among the 40 prisoners he recognized one young man as the person in his dreams. He was surprised and curious, but for a few days he kept his distance and just watched the young man. Finally he communicated with Father and he became his follower.

Father told Won Dok Kim that he would not be executed. "So don't worry about it," Father said.

Later General Mu returned from China and guaranteed to take responsibility for his secretary. He petitioned on his behalf and Mr. Kim's sentence was reduced to five years.

After a while Mr. Kim was to be moved to a prison camp at nearby Bongung. Father said, "If it is possible to avoid it, don't go there." However, Mr. Kim was moved to the other camp. By that time war had broken out. The guards started killing all the prisoners. Just before it was his turn to get on the truck to be taken out and shot, the camp was bombed. Won Dok Kim eventually escaped and reached Pusan, where he worked at the police headquarters as an inspector. His house became our church. Father stayed there for a while. Later, Mr. Kim moved to Seoul because the government moved back there after the armistice. Our church was really persecuted but he helped as a government official.

Another of the disciples was Rev. Jin Soo Kim. He had a Ph.D. from an American university and had been the chairman of North Korea's Five Providence Christian Association. Although Father warned them against it, he was sent to Bongung camp with Won Dok Kim. He was executed. Another disciple was Rung Bin Moon. He was released from Hungnam and stayed with Father for 40 days in Pyongyang. But he did not escape from North Korea. We do not know what happened to him.

There were 12 or 13 of us altogether who were Father's disciples in Hungnam. The others whose names I remember were Choon Shik Rong, who was killed; Nam Son Kim, one of the team leaders, who was probably killed; Yon Ok Kim; and Myong Hwan Pak. I don't know what happened to them.