

Sang Ik Choi, the First Unification Church Missionary - Part 6

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Japanese members meeting in Saitama, 1964

November 3 - Before it used to be a holiday called the Meiji Day, but after the losing the war, Japan changed it to Culture Day. We had a sports day during the morning, and received another ration of caramels. Outwardly, a prison sports day might seem enjoyable, but the inmates actually didn't seem so happy. In the afternoon, we got a ration of bean jam rice cakes, followed by dinner, so I was happy to have a full stomach. It was the first time. I am made of flesh like the rest, and my thoughts of the flesh are the same. I wanted to "Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect." [Matt. 5:48], cutting off from secular desires.

In the evening, I shared part of the Divine Principle with Mr. Ahn, but he wouldn't listen. He is like a North Korean youth, steeped in a materialistic view. I was a little embarrassed, but out of concern that the authority of the Heavenly Father's words would be scarred, I stopped. My heart was upset with him, this sorry rebel.

November 6 - I had a bad dream last night, but learning that I avoided sin unconsciously, I gained confidence that I wouldn't sin, even in a dream. I wished to perfect my character asap, to please the Lord. There were four months left of my sentence, but thinking of my mission, I was unbearably sorry. It also felt like while I was here, other brothers would go ahead of me, and I couldn't wait. I wondered if such an indemnity period was necessary because my past sins were many, and was afraid whether Heavenly Father would forgive me.

November 7 - As always, we rose at 6:30am, lunch at 11:30, stopped work at 4:30pm, and went to bed at 6:30pm. Today I received a long-awaited letter from a brother in Korea. The staff said that the Korean had to be translated first before handing it to me, so it would be held for a while. Being in a foreign land without a single visitor, the letter was most dear to me. It was three pages long. One page was from Seong-il Kim, and the others from Do-bin Song. I wanted to read it so much, I wouldn't have minded moving even to Yamaguchi for that. Letters were limited to one a month, so I wrote Seong-il Kim about life here, and not to worry. I would always live with hope and loyalty with the peace and authority of a child of God. So far in prison life, I'd always been respected by those around me, which was an honor I could offer to Heavenly Father and the Lord.

November 13 - Five of us were sentenced to 6 months on October 9, and came to Hiroshima on the 14th, but now, as a first-time offender I was also to be sent to Yamaguchi. I thought I would remain here as there had been no change for a long time, but the transfer was set, and the captain and I were to go.

Until now there had been no particular hardships and it wasn't cold or difficult, so I didn't feel it was penal servitude. But now it was like really going to prison. According to someone who came from there, rules were very strict, the cells had the old-style bars, winters were cold even in the cells and it was difficult. I thought about my weak body sensitive to cold and was a bit worried, but only briefly. Thinking that I was a child of God, disciple of the Lord, and about my important mission, all worries scattered. We were

made to shave, bathe, and check our belongings so we could leave at any time. Three of us were put in cell 18 of building 4.

I constantly checked with the captain to remind him, concerned about the future, and went to sleep, being told we were to leave the next day.

The best time was bedtime. This was like normal life. My pleasure was to remember the past. Good times with the Lord. Since joining the church, I was with the Lord for a while, but did not think that I had received love outwardly. I just constantly thought about him once saying that he was planning to have me take care of a big plan in the coming spring, and resolved not to go against his expectations. I thought about the Lord, always speaking in the inner room, or when we went to the mountains, when he took us to see a movie. I couldn't say anything. I could trust him absolutely from the bottom of my heart. I recall his confident appearance. I remember my brothers, the events since I joined, and the difficulty that hit. At times, I saw dreams where I was free, only to wake up and discover I wasn't and felt disappointed often.

Prison life was not that hard, but each day I was in agony. This was a matter of mind rather than body. I struggled whether I was going such a course as an indemnity condition or as a result of failure due to my lack of wisdom. Thoughts of self-justification came, that this was a condition of indemnity needed in order to save the Japanese people.

Moving to Yamaguchi Prison

November 14 - I rose before 6:00am. We came to where we changed into blue uniforms when we first arrived. This was a place where those entering and those leaving passed, a crossroads of sorrow and joy. The captain and I changed into our own clothes, were handcuffed in cold steel and tied together. We were put on a car and got off at a station after Hiroshima. Bald, handcuffed and tied together by rope, people probably saw us as murderers, thieves or felons. A guard and plainclothesman accompanied us. The people who knew nothing avoided us with fear and steely looks.

The earth was dark. "I am a child of God who came to save you, a savior who is a spring of life" - but it was a sad situation. Of course, rather than my own sorrow, the shame as a son of God was more painful. All of you, if you would know me, Japan would have peace even today, I thought. I could think back to the heart of Jesus Christ. The path of past prophets, the righteous, the martyrs, especially the path of the Lord's suffering, the 6000 years of the Heavenly Father's hardship, the course of grief. Oddly, I felt my faith becoming stronger.

The train came, we boarded. We sat in the regular seats. Everyone looked at me. They coldly avoided us. There was no way any of them would know who I was. I thought at that time, even if just one of you were to comfort me, I would return the kindness; I was seeking a friend. The train started going south from Hiroshima. I wanted to escape, to jump off the train. This was not possible and the sight outside the window was nice, but my heart was sad. I had to become free and move north toward Tokyo, but here I was tied, and going in the opposite direction. As I looked at the people on the streets and the houses, I vowed I would somehow save all of them. Now, I am not free, but soon, I believed I would become free and longed to go to Tokyo. I entrusted all to destiny.

Around noon, we arrived at Ogori station, and were driven to Yamaguchi Prison. I didn't get a good impression. After lunch, we were put in cell 17 of building 16. I had a time of quiet prayer. The staff were not kind and were strict. You couldn't say a word. Then again, it wasn't that bad. As soon as we entered the cell, we were given the task to unravel fishing nets using a nail. Sometimes, you slipped and poked a finger. At any rate, I will complete my tasks with a new mindset.

November 16 - It was Sunday. New prisoners could not go outside. Time spent all day in the room goes slowly. I had a day of quiet prayer. There was time from after dinner to bedtime, so I strove to pray and focus my spirit.