

Won-pil Kim Remembers the Early Days of the Unification Church - Part 3

Won-pil Kim

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The roads were about four meters (a little over four yards) wide and filled with people. If you lost sight of one of your children in the crowd, it was almost impossible to find him or her again. To turn around and go back to look for someone was impossible. Once I became separated from Father and tried to go back to look for him, but couldn't. Fortunately, I was able to find him. Then Father explained to me that if you become separated, you have to return to your starting point for that day, or at least your last resting place. Otherwise, there is no hope of finding each other again.

In the beginning, Mr. Pak, Father and I were filled with tension because of the dangers we faced. But as our pattern of life was repeated each day, we began to relax a little bit. The farther south we went, the safer it became. We always maintained a prayerful heart.

As long as we were north of the 38th parallel, we always felt restless; we were constantly aware of the danger. The easiest route to Seoul passed through a town named Kaesong and then the village of Panmunjom, on the 38th parallel. However, we heard a rumor that North Korean troops had already occupied the area. North Korean soldiers disguised as refugees were mingling with the people in order to spread these rumors, hoping to persuade people of the futility of escaping to the South. Some gave up and returned home.

We changed our plans and took a route that passed near Haeju, a coastal city directly south of Pyongyang. One day, U.S. Air Force planes came and strafed the road we were taking, because North Korean soldiers were taking cover among the refugees. We were able to escape to the foot of some mountains, where we were safe, but on the way we had to walk over the bodies of those who had been killed by bombs. I saw a mother and child lying on the ground. The mother had been killed in the raid, but the baby was still alive. People were escaping for their lives, and nobody paid attention to the crying baby on the back of its dead mother. Like Mr. Pak, that crying baby was also a representative of mankind. War is very cruel and miserable. If Christianity in Korea had accepted Father, that war would never have happened. Father had to take responsibility for the failure of Christianity.

Walking to the island

We had heard that from a certain island just off the coast near Haeju, boats were taking people to safety in the South. One of Father's friends from Seoul had been living on the island a number of years before, and Father decided to go to the island and try to hire a boat from him. Along the central part of its west coast, Korea has some of the highest tides in the world. There are many islands, and at low tide one can walk out to some of them. But a person has to cross quickly, before the tide returns.

At low tide the ground was muddy; if a person stood still very long, he would sink up to his knees in the mud. Since using a bicycle was out of the question, Father decided to carry Mr. Pak on his back to the island. I carried the bicycle, in addition to my knapsack. It was the dead of winter and pitch dark when we

set out. A torch had been lit on the island, so we could see our destination, but we could not see the next step ahead of us. There were unexpected rocks and holes. We would feel our way, step by step, before putting full weight on a leg. When we started out, the water was knee-high, but it became waist-deep by the time we reached the island. If Mr. Pak fell and broke his leg again, there would be no doctor to tend to him.

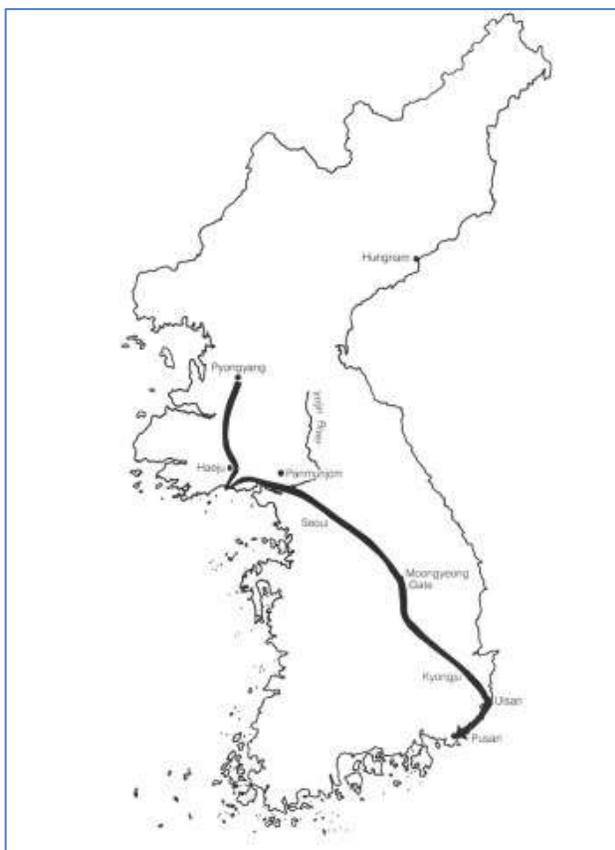
Upon arriving at the island, Father discovered that his friend was already dead. Moreover, many other people had also gone to the island to try to escape by boat. Only one boat remained, and we got on board. But it was announced that only the families of soldiers or policemen were to be allowed to make the journey. We got off the boat and headed back to the mainland.

As I look back on that experience, I wonder how Father was able to carry Mr. Pak on that long and dangerous crossing to the island. Mr. Pak weighed about as much as Father. You can imagine how difficult it would be to carry a heavy person for several kilometers.

As I was telling this story one time, Father commented, "If I could not have made it, carrying Mr. Pak across to the island, then I could not be responsible for the restoration of the universe." This is typical of Father's attitude: whatever he does is not just for the person immediately involved, but because that person represents many other people, and ultimately the world. Father regarded Mr. Pak as a representative of humankind. North Korea was a symbol of hell, or the satanic world, and South Korea symbolized Canaan, or heaven.

Father's mission is to bring all of humankind back from the hell of the fallen world to Canaan. With desperation and determination, Father fulfilled this symbolically by carrying Mr. Pak on his back during parts of the journey from North to South Korea.

Father makes a promise the first crossing had been very difficult, but then we had to return. There seemed to be no hope of getting back to the mainland. We had almost nothing to eat, just small portions of rice powder, which we ate very slowly.



Suffering and blessing

Father knew that both Mr. Pak and I were despondent, so he told us that once we reached the mainland, there would be people waiting for us who would offer us a big dinner. Because of those encouraging words, we were able to walk back.

It was close to nightfall when we arrived at the shore, where some young people from a village patrol accosted us. Father's hair was still short from his prison days, and these young men assumed that Father was an escaped soldier from North Korea. (South Korean soldiers had longer hair than North Korean soldiers.) It was wartime and conditions were very confusing. There were no regulations; once people became suspicious of someone, they would harass him. So they beat up Father.

Father explained that he was a minister and had just been released from prison, but they did not believe him. Finally, to test him, they asked him to recite the first verse of John chapter 16. Father answered with no problem, and the guards were impressed. Finding a Bible in Father's luggage,

they believed him and set him free.

By then it was very dark, and we had no place to stay. Finally, we saw a light and approached the house. A newly married young couple welcomed us. There was a two-room house, and they offered us the warmer room, the one nearer the kitchen, and a beautiful quilt which had been especially made for their wedding. They also prepared a delicious dinner for us. This was the first time we had received such warm hospitality on our journey.

Father always remembers those who helped him during his escape. Even now, he recalls them. He says the time will come when he can return to them ten or twenty times what they gave him. Once Father has been helped or cared for, he never forgets it. He tries to return much more than he receives.

We didn't think about it that night, but the following day, we remembered Father's promise. Knowing that we were exhausted, he had told us we would meet wonderful people. But if we had comforted Father, realizing that he, too, was very tired, it would not have been necessary for him to tell us that. Before we met those people, Father was struck and beaten by the young men. Not Mr. Pak or me, only Father was beaten. After the beating, we met the young couple and received so much blessing from them.

So I learned that when we receive a blessing, it is because Father has already paid indemnity for us. At the time, I was really happy and overjoyed, but later, I reflected and saw what Father had done for us and realized the price he had paid. Then I could understand that Father, and God as well, suffer in order to give us blessings. Before joys come, Father and God have suffered.

If I hadn't shown weakness and needed so much encouragement, Father would not have been struck by the village patrol. I deeply repented for having shown weakness, causing Father to be struck. If we had deep faith, we probably would not need to feel cheered and encouraged by little blessings, and Father would not have to suffer as much.

Again, we set out in a southerly direction toward Seoul.