

Unification Church East African Missionary's Prison Experience with God

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May 30, 2018



This testimony was written some 30 years ago about experiences that happened more than 40 years ago. The name of the nation was not included in the story and perhaps, as that country has changed much in the intervening period, we will leave it that way. Our missionaries at that time were all young and many were very inexperienced in worldly affairs. As such, they went out in pure faith and into situations they could not have imagined or predicted.

During the missionary workshop in Japan, I remembered the words of the lecturer who gave us Victory Over Communism lectures. He mentioned my particular nation and said it was essential that any missionary working there be careful because communist China held such strong influence over the country. I developed a consuming fear that I might be executed, even before setting foot in Africa.

When I finally entered my mission country in July of 1975, my missionary counterparts had already been working there for two or three months. I learned that they had been witnessing at the university. Little by little, more people discovered that they were members of the Unification Church. The situation became so bad that they were often followed by the communists. A few days after our

initial meeting, the police raided our center. All our luggage was checked and our passports taken away. Unification Church literature was removed. We immediately split up and moved to three separate places. After the police investigated for seventeen days, they arrested the three of us. I was questioned for eight hours and then transferred to the central prison. I was confined to an isolation cell in an area where eight other people were imprisoned. Three of them were sentenced to death for burglary, murder, and assassination of the vice-president.

At 7:00 a.m. every morning the door of my cell was unlocked. I was allowed to stay out and read books or talk to other prisoners until 5:00 p.m., at which time I was escorted back to my cell and the door was locked again. I spent each night in complete darkness.

During the first month of my imprisonment, I received no word from the authorities. Then a high official from the office of the Vice President came to question me. He asked me what my real purpose was in coming. He also told me that he could not help me unless I made an honest confession. Until his visit, I insisted that although I was a member of the Unification Church, the reason I came to this country was as a tourist, but they were not satisfied. This time I confessed that my real intention for coming was to evangelize the ideology of the Unification Church.

Then the high official, who seemed quite a believer in communism despite the fact that he was a Christian, started to attack my faith. He fiercely questioned, "Why is the Unification Church opposing Mao Tse-tung and Kim Il Sung? The Unification Church is a tool of the C.I.A. How long have you been training as a spy?" Then he asked me if I knew the laws of this nation. When I admitted that I did not, he said, "All those who are engaged in missionary work without permission from the government must be imprisoned for ten years!" And with those words, he left. I struggled with the possibility that I might very well be imprisoned for ten years!

As people of faith, we might continue to feel uneasy and dissatisfied until we accept our situation with gratitude and feel it is given by God. The first forty days of my imprisonment I constantly thought I might be executed or imprisoned for ten years. I was ignorant about the real situation, but because my imagination was so vivid, I was always uneasy and my heart very unstable.

I fasted for four days to end the 40-day period. Through this four-day fasting condition, my heart began to change and I realized that since it had not been my will, but the will of God, that I serve this country as a

representative of True Parents, I should accept whatever the consequences with gratitude, and simply surrender myself to the will of Heaven. The uneasiness and binding feeling around my heart lessened. I thought, "Throughout history many Christians have been imprisoned. Though ten years is a long time, it may be God's will that I stay in prison even up to three years. Anyway, I certainly don't need to worry about a visa while I am in jail, and it is a great chance for me to learn the language."



Even though the three first missionaries were expelled from their mission country, they had already made deep friendships through their witnessing efforts. Among these early members and guests, one went to another country less hostile to religion and joined the church there.

I often thought about Father's course during my nightly solitary confinement. When he was in prison in North Korea and even at the edge of death, Father comforted the heart of God. Although the "persecution" I experienced from the officials was intended to scare me, I began to feel ashamed that I worried so much about my own situation. As it was, the three of us were released from prison and sent back to our homelands.

But in prison and even afterward, I had some deep realizations. I recognized my lack of faith and repented for it. That is when I began to pray for the salvation of the people of my nation and to connect with Father's heart. Learning gratitude in any circumstance is one type of winning "victory over persecution."