

Father's Life in His Own Words - Part 34

Sun Myung Moon

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A view of the Chosun Nitrogen Fertilizer Company's Hungnam plant showing the dock area extending into the waterway

Suffering in Pyongyang Prison and Hungnam Labor Camp

Father tells the story of his incarceration, trial and imprisonment in Pyongyang

Once I began my evangelical work, membership began to increase. The policy of those governing northern Korea at the time, however, was to systematically eradicate all religious groups. Also, ministers of established churches saw that many members of their congregations were coming to me, so they decided to report me to the authorities. This is how I came to be jailed for a third time in my life. This occurred at 10:00 am on February 22, 1948.

They accused me of being a spy for South Korea, an agent of the Syngman Rhee faction in Seoul. They said all kinds of things, made up all sorts of ridiculous accusations. They claimed I was an agent sent by those wanting to take over the government north of the DMZ, an agent whose purpose was to plunder everything, and they did various other ridiculous things to have me arrested.

On the day I was handcuffed and taken to jail, I told myself, This is happening so that I can have a mark on me that says God loves me.

In the end, I was forced out into a global wilderness. That 4,300 years of history had to be indemnified in 43 years was so wearisome and unjust. You don't know the bitterly tragic circumstances that made me go to the concentration camp in Hungnam after the loss of the entire national and global foundations that God had worked six thousand years to establish. It seems like only yesterday that the people who wanted to welcome me as representing hope for the future both in heaven and on earth cried out in agony, and that we pledged in desperate tears to meet again, as they watched me being led through the mist into hell, into the world of darkness. It seems like only yesterday that I declared to them, "You are disappearing, but I will pursue my course and someday I will come back with the bright morning sun in my bosom and I will liberate you once again." I have never forgotten how I shouted as I was being led away in handcuffs. Each time I faced difficulty, I remember the way I prayed in that situation.

My head is shaved

I was jailed in the Internal Affairs Station because of the jealousy of the established denominations and the communist government's policy to do away with religion. On February 25, my head was shaved. I remember the person who shaved it and the day he did it. I can never forget how I sat and watch as my hair fell to the ground.

As I sat there, I told God I had been brought to this place by my enemies and was being forced to have my head shaved. You cannot imagine how brightly my eyes shone during that experience. I watched my hair falling to the floor, and let go of the happiness that I had sought. It was particularly upsetting to me that I had to have my head shaved in the presence of my enemies. In the course of weaving together the circumstances of restoration, all these obstacles were particularly regrettable.



War refugees headed toward Busan, which became a shantytown during the war years

Torture and interrogation

Even when I was tortured so harshly that I threw up blood, repeatedly collapsed on the floor and finally lost consciousness, I never asked God to help me.

Instead, I always prayed, "Father, don't worry. I'm not dead yet. I'm not going to die yet. I am still faithful to you. I still have a mission that I need to accomplish."

I was a devoted son, comforting God. I held the blood in my mouth and straightened my posture; even on moonless nights after I had been tortured, I never forgot the life I had led previously, offering comfort to Heaven.

The times I would collapse from torture were the moments I could hear the voice of God. The times my life seemed on the verge of coming to an end were the moments I could meet God. You may not be able to imagine the profound background to this truth, or the deep valleys and dark tunnels that had to be traveled before this truth of the Unification Church could be revealed. I know that it was a situation where someone might ask, Hey, Rev. Moon! How did you ever get this far?

I was not beaten for my own sake but for the sake of the nation. The tears I shed were the tears of the indemnity paid so that I could shoulder the pain of a nation.

The circumstances called for me to shout, You rascal! to Satan's face, to face the substantial manifestation of Satan and shout, Go ahead. Hit me. Hit me! When the time comes, I will repay you at least sevenfold. Right now, you are giving me the material I will need to do that.

Even as I was being put in the place of torture, I was telling them to go ahead and hit me.

Beneath my clothing, I have scars in several places that I acquired after I took up this way of life. When I see these, I think of them as medals given me by humanity and by Heaven. The scars remind me: Have you forgotten the pledge you made? Have you forgotten how you pledged to follow this path at the risk of your life until you die?

Each time I see these, whether it's in the morning, noon or evening, I rededicate myself. I tell myself, Because you've been given these scars, you have to win. I encourage myself toward victory.

Put on trial

When I was in the North, I was originally scheduled to go to trial on April 3, but the Communist Party took so long to come up with excuses for oppressing the church that it was April 7 before I finally went to

trial. This was my fortieth day of imprisonment. I was being tried in court as someone hounded by Christianity, and the Communists took extra time in preparing the trial so they could use it to show the party members how religion was evil and like an opiate.

During my trial, certain Christian ministers came and testified against me, heaping all sorts of accusations on top of me. No one else can understand or experience how shocking this was. I still have not forgotten that time. Throughout my life I have kept the memory what it felt like to be imprisoned and then taken to court. It's a desperate feeling when you realize you are going to court and that every word you say may affect your fate.

I don't talk much about how I even laughed at the Communist Party. I told them that my personal history was not something that would go away simply because they heaped blame on me. It seems like just yesterday I told them that although I was going without complaint, the day would come when they would be in the palm of my hand and be held accountable by humankind for their actions. It was Heaven's strategy to make certain that I would not have the slightest attraction to communism, and God's strategy to make sure I would not feel too much sympathy for Christianity that was under the communist realm. It was a strategy to make sure that I rejected all this.

Send off by members

As I was led away from the court back to jail after receiving my sentence, I shook my handcuffs in front of the members of my congregation, and they made a clear and resonating sound. I still cannot forget how I waved good-bye to them with those handcuffs loudly clanking together. In that moment, it was as if a historic movie were being created for future generations. That moment would become an explosive foundation for countless young people in future generations to pledge their determination.

Singing songs of hope for tomorrow is more powerful than singing of the sadness of today. The heart can always be bigger if it is filled with hope for tomorrow, rather than bitterness over the injustices of today. It didn't matter how evil the enemy was that placed handcuffs on my wrists that day. When I stood there in handcuffs and bid farewell to the church and the congregation I loved, my words were signposts pointing toward a historical judgment. That is what I felt in that moment. As a man, I had to proudly walk down the trail that had to be blazed again. Prison was no problem and death no hindrance to a man who understood that he can establish the original value.

I still cannot forget how the members who remained in Pyongyang waved good-bye as I was taken away. I shed no tears, but they were all weeping. It was not as if a child were dying or a husband leaving home never to return. I could see them sniffing and wiping away tears. How tragic that was! As I watched that scene, I felt that a person who goes in search of Heaven is never abjectly unhappy.

Even if I tried, I could never forget the sound of their voices and the sight of how their whole bodies shook in sadness as I was being led away to prison. This is painful. When I think of it, in some respects, this is pain. It is pain.

Incarceration in Pyongyang Prison^[1]

I was handcuffed and taken to Pyongyang Prison on April 7, but I went with a sense of hope. I tried to imagine what it would be like when I had completed the course. I was very curious about that. After I had been sentenced and was being led away to prison, I was filled with hope. I realized that even in prison there would be people God had prepared. Rather than focus on the incident immediately at hand, I thought about what was going to come after that. I told myself, Here is something that needs to be done to cross over another peak. I was expecting something like this. I wondered what would come after this.

^[1] Korea's largest prison, built by the Japanese. Its cells held groups of prisoners and were either 7.5 sq m or 14 sq m in size.