

Father's Life in His Own Words - Part 42

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Three days into the war, North Korea captured Seoul; here, people, many of them refugees, in the city of Daegu celebrate news of Seoul's recapture by UN Forces in September 1950. North Korea's ally, China, took Seoul in January 1951 but relinquished it two months later.

Stepping into Freedom and Cataclysmic War

Those who followed me from Hungnam

At the time of my release, several people clung to me, crying desperately, asking permission to follow me. In fact, four people left their parents and wives behind to accompany me after I emerged from the labor camp in North Korea. Among them one was a man from the Moon clan, in which he thus came to represent Cain.

This man, Mr. Moon Jeong-bin, had worked as a department head in the South Hamgyong provincial office in Hamhung. [\[1\]](#) He was sentenced to Hungnam prison because of a mistake committed by one of his subordinates. He spent some time with me in the prison cell, and from the spirit world, he was guided to become my follower. He later followed me as I traveled from Hungnam to Pyongyang.

Despite being a family man with a wife and two sons, he was very devoted to me and after his release kept visiting me in prison, hoping for my release. After my release, I set out in a hurry to reach Pyongyang, but since I was passing his house, I felt obliged to stop by and greet his family. After we exchanged some greetings and said our goodbyes, I left to continue my journey. Suddenly, he ran out of his house and started following me. "Why are you coming with me?" I asked. He replied that he felt compelled to follow me. So he came along.

A bundle of tattered prison clothes

The clothes I had worn in the labor camp, my shirts and underwear, were all made of cotton. When prisoners worked in the factory, the fertilizer ingredients - ammonia and sulfuric acid - would often stain their clothes. Both substances are caustic; their chemical action destroys an organic fabric such as cotton. If you pull on cotton clothes, they easily rip apart. After long use, our clothes were full of holes and began to rot. A beggar wearing such clothes would look even more miserable. Those clothes looked and smelled horrible. If you pulled on or scratched any part of that cotton cloth, it would practically disintegrate into shreds. Since I could not throw those clothes away, I stuffed them all into my bedding, which I spread on the floor and used as a mattress in the prison cell. I pulled out the stuffing and replaced it with all these ragged clothes to preserve them throughout my three-year term.

What possessions do you leave prison with? I carried a bundle of those old clothes with me as I travelled from Hamhung to Pyongyang over a period of ten days. In Pyongyang, I asked a member to look after the bundle, saying, "Even if you have to throw away your silk jacket, skirt or a blanket made of foreign satin, keep this bundle safe and make sure you return it to me." Nevertheless, he threw my bundle out and it was lost.

If I only had those clothes with me today, I would not need to explain anything. They would have been too valuable to exchange for the whole universe. The material could speak for itself and stir more profound emotions than any talented orator's speech could ever do. I still have no words to express my disappointment about this loss. Where am I going to find a substitute for this? Is one for sale somewhere? No. Ordinary things such as a small piece of paper or a fragment of a newspaper article become precious historical relics if they are related to your public mission. Even if you are totally impoverished and starving on a single piece of dried radish leaf, you should first think of preserving it as historical evidence by filing it or taking a picture of it. These things will allow your children to inherit the very essence of our tradition without you preaching a word to them.

Evidence of war preparations

I observed things clearly when I came out of prison in Hungnam. I was very interested in all the changes that had taken place around me. From the very beginning, when the North Koreans laid a new bridge, it was designed so that the road could be widened up to two lanes each way. They built roads like highways. Since cement was abundant in the North, they paved the roads with a thick layer of concrete, a strong construction material. None of this escaped my attention. It was obvious that the roads had been built to withstand the weight of heavy tanks moving, and the bridges had also been constructed so that thirty-ton tanks could cross them. Since the road from Hungnam was strategically important to the East Sea coast, it had already been prepared for military purposes. All things considered, it was clear that the North had been preparing for war ahead of time.

I understood that war preparations were implemented by the KGB as soon as the government was established in the North. It was in line with the Soviet policy in the Far East, which is why all the fertilizer produced by the Hungnam factory was sent off to the Soviet Union. They used to send several loads per day, which they bartered for ten- or twenty-year-old Soviet weapons. Since these weapons were so cheap, they got most of the old Soviet cache. They used them to train soldiers along the thirty-eighth parallel in order to prepare for the invasion of the South. They did not need state-of-the-art heavy equipment there and managed very well with the outdated weapons.

I was aware of all of this at that time. Based on my personal observations, it was clear that North Korea was readying itself for war. Everything was prepared by 1950.



Suspicion of refugees prevails in a civil war. From Hungnam to Busan, Father would have gone through or skirted frequent North Korean and South Korean checkpoints like this one.

Contacting those who had stayed close

I travelled on foot from Hungnam, on the east coast, all the way to Pyongyang, near the west coast. Although I had sent people out to all of my followers in Pyongyang letting them know that I had returned, most of them did not come to see me. Nevertheless, I did succeed in bringing some people together, even if just a few.

I stayed in Pyongyang for forty days, though my hometown was only a hundred and ten kilometers from the city. To go there and back would have taken only a couple of days. Still, I did not visit my parents or my brother and sisters at home. Instead, I looked for those people who had earlier responded to God's call. I made a point to visit everyone who had promised to follow God's will - every single person, without exception.

I never made it to my hometown.

I wanted to know what happened to those who had followed me before I went to prison. Moreover, before I visited my own family, I felt obliged to communicate with everyone whom I remembered from that period. This is the heavenly way.

Since these people promised to remain loyal to me before I went to prison and did not notify me they'd had a change of heart, I was still responsible for taking care of them as their teacher. As long as I was still chosen by Heaven and as long as the person did not directly express ill will toward me (in which case Heaven would have no other choice but to forsake him) I was bound by the obligation of a promise exchanged between a teacher and a follower. Because of this, I visited all of my scattered followers. When I could not visit directly, I would at least send Won-pil in my stead. Under the circumstances, was there time left to visit my home? In some cases, it took a whole week just to find one person. Even if a person had gone against me, his descendants still have to be saved. The fate of those who had opposed me hung in the balance and had to be cleared up at the time of my visit. That is why it took me a whole forty days to complete the job.

I could not help leaving my mother behind in North Korea, even though I remembered her monthly tearful visits to Hungnam prison. I had to find all my followers in Pyongyang first. I visited everyone, even someone well over eighty years old, only to find out that the person had passed away already. My goal was to call on and bring together every single person that came to mind, young and old - everyone who had become a member or established a providential connection with me.

I would call on somebody and be rejected at first. I would return and be rejected again. Even until the third time. This went on until people started to evacuate Pyongyang en masse in December. I kept sending people out until sunset on December 2, and I continued desperately offering conditions as expressions of my sincerity until God gave me the direction to leave.

I could not abandon people. I accomplished everything I had to do in the North. I had started out in Pyongyang with a perspective based on heart and before I could leave the place, I removed the pain in my heart and found the courage to offer this new heart to God for the sake of His will.

This is why I left Pyongyang that night. A leader needs to be that serious about his responsibility. You should accomplish your God-given mission even amidst a life-and-death struggle. Once you have started something, you should make sure you complete it. Those who move on to do other things before completing their original mission will realize very soon that their way forward is blocked. This is why I went out and resolved all the issues with my former followers.... I made sure to complete such a foundation before leaving. When I look back on those days, I have no regrets or pangs of conscience about anything.

[1] Hamhung is fifty kilometers inland from Hungnam, which is a port city on the East Sea