

Victory Through Perseverance

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"Oh, no, I've lost another pair of shoes."

Even before the member would finish his sentence, those around him would know what had happened. Poverty sometimes makes people do bad things. At the end of Sunday services, we often would find that a pair or two of shoes were missing from the shoe rack where we had left them to enter the sanctuary. It could have been a member of our family whose faith was not yet deep who had taken them, or it could have been someone who was not one of our members. People would sometimes come to church, stealthily put on a nice pair of shoes and walk away wearing them.

So, whenever I had a little extra money, I would buy new shoes for members who had lost them. I also prayed that the person who had taken the shoes would set his or her life straight.

Between 200 and 300 people would attend our services and other events, and there was never enough rice to serve them all. So we made porridge by boiling barley in a large iron pot. As the event progressed inside the church, outside we would make a wood fire and cook the barley porridge. Members would sit down in little clusters and share bowls of the porridge, and they were very grateful. "All of this is a gift from God," they would say.

When a church holy day would approach, I felt more anxious than excited or happy. We would have to start making preparations two weeks in advance to organize the deliveries of the offering table towers of fruit and delicacies, banners, flowers and candles, hoping that there would be enough for each member to have an apple or a candy. When I was pregnant I craved tangerines, but we could not afford them; they were so expensive. One member learned about this, however, and bought some tangerines for me. I ate six or seven of them on the spot. I was so grateful, tears welled up in my eyes.

From birth until my marriage, not a single day of the path I walked was smooth. Even after marriage, various storms continued without end.

However, I never once strayed from the path of faith, obedience, and love toward God. The path I walked was a thorny one, and it was difficult to even think about enduring it, yet nothing could stop me from persevering. Just as Satan tempted Jesus long ago and later Reverend Moon, he also tested me severely. I overcame that harsh and terrible ordeal through patience and devotion.

At the same time, that was also the time when I felt God's grace visiting me most deeply. When I was in the midst of suffering, God appeared to me and guided me with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire.

My husband and I always conversed intensely on various matters. We could do so out of our infinite trust in each other. We went through so much together that we could understand each other with only a look. The life of Father Moon and the path I have walked bear an uncanny resemblance.

Most people assumed that I was so happy and that I wanted for nothing.

"You received the seal as God's only begotten Daughter," they would think, "and you were born as a perfected being. Therefore, you attained your position with no effort."

Many people thought like this. They believed that as the Mother of the universe I blissfully had met Father Moon, formed a happy family and enjoyed life. That describes my life from one perspective, but I have scaled mountains as treacherous and impassable as any in this world. I was able to surmount them all with my husband's love, which was more than any wife has ever received.

Although I had 14 children, I never once felt that they were too many. In those early days, living conditions were very difficult, and until my fourth child, I gave birth in a dark, cramped room in Cheongpa-dong. It was only from the fifth child that I was finally able to go to a hospital. As people often say, there is no child born without a mother's pain. Yet I endured even more pain as I watched my children suffer.

From an early age, my children had to endure things that were difficult to understand. From the time they were five or six and began playing in the alleyways, they faced cold stares and exclusion from those around them.

"Your father is Moon Sun-myung, isn't he?" adults would shout at an innocent five-year-old. "Do you know what your father does? The Unification Church is creating such a disturbance in the world!"

While in Korea they were criticized for being the sons and daughters of Sun Myung Moon, and when we moved to the United States, they faced discrimination for being Asian. It pained me to see my children suffer just because they were the children of Moon Sun-myung and Han Hak-ja, but I did not lament or blame others. I held them in my arms and set an example for them by offering prayers of gratitude.

My husband and I cared for our children with love and devotion, but because we had so much work to do for the church and the providence, we were unable to spend much time with them.

One day, when my husband was on his world tour, Hyo Jin, barely three years old, sat on the bedroom floor and began to draw. Normally he liked to draw cars or bikes, but that day he clumsily drew a face on the white paper. Even though I knew that it was his father, I asked him, "Hyo Jin, who is that?"

Hyo Jin did not answer me, but drew a face on another piece of paper. Though it looked different from the first one, it was still without a doubt his father's face. Hyo Jin was usually very active, but on that day he sat quietly and continued to draw. He did not grow tired of drawing his father's face, even after spending the whole day at it. And he did not stop drawing it the next day or the day after. It was only when his father returned that he stopped drawing. I can still remember quite vividly how brightly he smiled at his father as he was embraced by him. It was as if he had been given the world.

If I had experienced only joyful things, I never would have been able to look into people's deepest, innermost hearts. I never would have known the joys of the kingdom of heaven. I have passed through the bottom of hell and experienced every kind of bitterness in life. God wanted me to train myself. What I needed was untiring faith, strong will and perseverance. That is how I reached this point today.

No matter who you are, you will not experience only sweetness and joy on the path to the kingdom of heaven. Going through spiritual struggle is, in fact, a most precious blessing.

Through it you can feel the grace of God. Only when you pass those tests can you be born anew as a true human being. The fruit of perseverance will grow and ripen within you, and one day will become the source of your deepest pride.