

# Leaving North Korea

*In this installment, the fifteenth to appear in Today's World, Father is a refugee, like millions of his countrymen, fleeing south. The text is drawn from the fourth chapter of the second book of the series True Parents' Life Course (참부모님 생애 노정). The books are composed of excerpts from Father's speeches over many years, arranged more or less chronologically in the form of an autobiographical account.*

## Departure from Pyongyang

I left the city of Pyongyang only after all other refugees had gone. Also, I took with me a crippled person, physically impaired by a broken leg.<sup>1</sup> I put him on a bicycle and pulled it all the way to the south. We started on our way as the North Korean and the Chinese troops were approaching; they were just twelve kilometers behind us. Even amid this life-or-death danger, I can stand tall in front of God. I have never betrayed a promise to Him.

I left North Korea in the winter of 1950. By January of 1951, I had travelled all the way down to Busan on the south coast. I was wearing odd clothes when I left the north. I had on an overcoat that was part of my middle-school uniform. It had buttons all the way down the front. You don't have the luxury of choosing what to wear when you're a refugee. I wish my arms had been shorter. It was frigid, and I had to pull my arms into the sleeves to stay warm. I must have looked really smart in that outfit. Everybody stared at me when I walked down the street. In a situation like that, I always thought that though other people complain about their fate and bear grudges toward Heaven, amidst all of this suffering, I will not be like that.

<sup>1</sup> Park Jeong-hwa.







**Left: A woeful, uprooted child in frigid temperatures; Right: December 2, 1950, Pyongyang residents prepare for evacuation a day after enemy planes bombed the city's airfield. UN Forces hoped to prevent an exodus. Many left before Father did.**

### From Pyongyang to Cheongdan

The Chinese Red Army was approaching us from behind. When the three of us started out, we soon realized that long lines of trucks loaded with soldiers and military equipment were clogging all roads leading south. Since the disabled man was bigger than I, I could not imagine carrying him on my back. I decided to put him on a bicycle and transport him that way. It was an extremely hard job. Under the circumstances, with our way forward blocked, death seemed imminent, but I could not afford to die. I was prepared to die, however. I was determined to become the most miserable refugee of that period. If God were to give His blessing to the most miserable Korean in the midst of all of the suffering that had befallen our country, He would have no choice but to give it to me. I felt that kind of determination on the way from North Korea.

Since all the main roads were blocked by the retreating troops and military equipment, civilians had no other option but to travel by narrow paths or across barren rice fields. Words cannot express how hard this journey was. At some point, Park Jeong-hwa said to me, "I love you but if we continue like this, we will all die." He tried to commit suicide but I caught him just in time and chastised him. We continued walked, taking shortcuts through forests and down obscure mountain paths known only to local villagers. We were able to make headway in this manner. God was watching over us and guiding our steps all the way.

### Refugee cuisine

I could tell many stories from that period. The biggest problem throughout our journey was finding food. Since we could not afford to carry any baggage or supplies with us, we could either starve or steal. So, we would go into abandoned houses and look for food. In fact, if we hadn't, the Chinese soldiers would have emptied those houses of supplies anyway.

We would go into houses in the early evening. Going from house to house in search of food, we'd usually find something. I told the others to take only the first food they came across. If we were to pick and choose, then we would be really become thieves. And if heaven and earth could see what we were doing, they should be able to look at us with sympathy,

as if to say those rascals steal other people's rice, but there is something different about them.

I told the other men to bring out whatever they first discovered in the rice jar<sup>2</sup>—be it hulled millet or corn. I would not allow them to exchange it for anything else found afterward. They would enter a house and chant "rice jar, rice jar, rice jar" as they looked for food.

Whenever we cooked, we would always prepare as much food as we could. The problem was that we had only one enamel cooking dish. Could refugees travel with cooking equipment banging and rattling along the way? Since we could always break tree twigs to use as chopsticks, the only thing we needed to carry with us was one enamel dish. So, when the three of us would sit around this small dish filled with rice, I would think about the value of hardships in my life. Under those circumstances, we could eat anything with great pleasure. Hardships teach us to long for and appreciate even simple things. Jesus meant this when he said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." With our stomachs growling, we longed for humble food as if it were a delicious treat. A rice-cake made of rough barley would taste better than exquisite cuisine from a royal dinner table. Could someone in our situation be fussy?

### Mastering the desire to eat

Even today, my philosophy is to start eating after everybody else and put down my chopsticks first. I'm always the last to pick them up and the first to put them down. Also, when there are different things to eat, I always start with the least delicious food. I acquired this habit during my refugee life. For the sake of my hungry followers, I would always stop eating first even though I would still be hungry.

When the three of us were escaping from the north, we would get equally hungry and crave food, especially when we had our food in front of us. We were all equally hungry. I would hear the other two men would determine, "Even though our teacher always finishes eating first, I should try, at least once, to put my chopsticks down first," but once they

<sup>2</sup> This probably refers to a ceramic storage jar, which might hold up to twenty kilograms of rice.





**December 19, 1950: Refugees jam the decks of a South Korean navy ship and many fishing boats in the evacuation of Hungnam. UN forces, in retreat from Chinese Communist forces in the eastern part of North Korea, were also evacuated from this port city the same month. Right: One refugee carries another; Father has testified to sometimes carrying Park Jeong-hwa in this way.**

started to eat, they could never beat me. Who can put down his chopsticks while the rice bowl has still food in it? Such person naturally assumes leadership position in the group. The one who can put down the chopsticks first is the master.

#### **Six kilometers on the tidal flats**

When I got out of the prison in North Korea and headed for the thirty-eighth parallel, my thoughts were that I needed to get across the thirty-eighth parallel without fail. Based on this state of affairs, I had been consulting my intuition and had realized that the situation was rather unfavorable. In my heart I wanted to cross the border and go south.

We walked out to Yongmae Island<sup>3</sup> on the tidal flats and were the first ones to get on a boat moored there, but a crowd came and there was a ruckus. What happened was that those who were not the relatives of those soldiers or policemen were all dragged off.

All the military were in retreat;<sup>4</sup> how then, could ordinary people have been permitted on the boat? So we had to go back to the mainland because there was no boat for us. We went back and went south across the thirty-eighth parallel.

While we were crossing tidal flats to Yongmae Island, I thought to myself that if I could not make it Heaven would perish. You should love with the thought in your head that "If I fall by the wayside, where will that leave Heavenly Father?" Where, then, could you not go?

#### **The search and inspection of the Homeland Defense Corps**

Many things happened as we fled south. Won-pil wore a winter cap and an overcoat. Because it was very cold, he tucked it in and followed behind me. He looked like a woman. His face and voice were also feminine. At the time he did not even have a hint of a mustache. Though he was dressed like a man, wherever we went people thought he was a woman.

<sup>3</sup> See map on page 8.

<sup>4</sup> The Chinese Army had entered the war, and the tide had turned again.

Any time we were inspected, they checked to see whether he had testicles. Why do you laugh? Everyone knows about that, and I'm trying to explain it realistically. Several times he was told, "Stand up and take off your clothes!" He looked like a woman, almost completely. This happened many times.

That is all related to why he joined the Unification Church.... You may not know it, but I keep him near me because there is some element of his ancestral background that matches the providence. This aspect of his background is known only in the spirit world.

#### **Warm reception prepared after receiving a revelation**

After being released from prison, I was a wanderer with no possessions at all. During the months it took to go to Busan from Pyongyang, I begged for food and remained silent. Sometimes, my yearning for food was indescribable. It was part of my wandering life at that time. Nevertheless, I never prayed, "Heavenly Father, I don't have anything to eat today, so please provide me with something." Instead, I used to comfort Him until I fell asleep.

Sometimes I would think, Tomorrow a beautiful woman will definitely give us something on the roadside, and the next day a woman dressed in white would be standing on the roadside waiting for us, just as I'd anticipated.

She would say, "Yesterday I was told to prepare everything and wait. I've been waiting for you. Please have something to eat." This kind of thing happened on many occasions.

If you could only feel my heart at the time, you couldn't help crying. The same is true for God. No one on earth knows the sorrow God and I shared as we held each other and wept. The depth of my feelings for God cannot be measured. When I recall it, I feel as if all the cells in my body are aching.

#### **A relentless march to the Imjin River in the dead of night**

We came out of the North, experiencing all these hardships on the way, and when evening came all the refugees were worn out from walking. It is extremely tiring. That being the case,





**Left:** The sudden influx of half a million Chinese troops late in 1950 drove the UN Forces back south of the thirty-eighth parallel. **Right:** For military and security reasons, UN policy was not to encourage North Koreans to seek refuge in the South. Many were turned back. Father and his band crossed the frozen Imjin river near where it bisects the thirty-eighth parallel.

the others in my group wanted to go into a village and sleep, but I insisted we cross the Imjin River even if it meant walking all night. The others all went to sleep. Because I insisted we go on, my companions must have felt, How obstinate Rev. Moon is!

Don't you think so? They were downhearted. It was night and everyone else was sleeping, but we three all came down to the Imjin River, pushing the bicycle. When we reached the banks of the river we slept there. It was about half past one or two in the morning.

It is about thirty kilometers from Cheongdan to the thirty-eighth parallel. We followed that road on a moonlit night. I'll never forget that. We were so tired that Kim Won-pil dozed as he walked, carrying his bag. Someone who isn't aware of the situation might behave like that, but I went faster with every step I took. Something told me we needed to reach the banks of the Imjin by that evening. At times like that, I'm on full alert and implement an emergency plan of operations. I



**A UN forces checkpoint overlooking the Imjin River (near the border between North and South Korea) during the Korean War**

extend my antenna to its fullest.

There was a house there, and just a step away from it was South Korea. No one lived in that house. Though it was ripe with all kinds of smells, I thought it was the blessed land. In an emergency, we'd only have to take one step to reach South Korea.

#### **Across the Imjin River and on to Seoul**

My next worry was that the Imjin River would not be frozen and we wouldn't be able to cross, but the weather turned cold and it did freeze. So we awoke at the break of day and set out. The Imjin River was frozen and we could finally cross it. Those behind us were all intercepted by withdrawing UN troops and all of them were sent back. We were the last ones to cross the river. That is how we came to South Korea.

If we had delayed for even a minute, what would have happened? A person's fate can be determined by time; sometimes it can even be ruined by it. Things like this happen all the time in our everyday lives; how much more would they happen when following the path decreed by Heaven? It was such a serious situation! None of you understand this.

If climbing over a hill meant salvation, should you persistently push others forward, or not? If they don't want to go, you should force them to go, even if that means seizing them by their necks and dragging them onward. That is love.

#### **Prayer at the thirty-eighth parallel**

I cannot forget the prayer I offered as I crossed the thirty-eighth parallel. "Heavenly Father! I am going to South Korea. I came to North Korea but failed to fulfill Your will, and with the sorrow of a someone who couldn't succeed, I was confined to a prison here. Now I am going down to South Korea with others who are also pursued. I know even as I go down this road, I will have to come back up some day, and if I cannot cross the thirty-eighth parallel to visit North Korea, I will instill my ideology in my descendants and make them go in my stead. If they cannot go, I will have to send my followers."

I am made this resolution before I left. I have fought my way through until now, repeatedly living that same day for a decade. The steps I took after making my pledge before Heaven were different from yours.

I held soil from the thirty-eighth parallel in my cupped hands and resolved, I will demolish communism with these



hands, and within a few years I will return.

It seems like yesterday that I prayed that I would get the free world under control and rally the free world to liberate North Korea. Standing with both two feet on the thirty-eighth parallel, I pledged through tears to unite North Korea and South Korea with my own hands.

Not even those who came with me knew that I had prayed with tears. I had left my sadness behind me, along with my parents and siblings. I have still have not forgotten that as I left behind me my mother and father, who had devoted themselves to me in my hometown, I told them to wait for the day this disloyal son returned, to not die but to continue waiting for me.

### Called up for military service and physical examination in Seoul

I had cut my hair short before I left North Korea, and when I came to Seoul I passed through Chang Gyeong Won.<sup>5</sup> There were young soldiers there, who were (now that I think of it) in the Marine Corps. One of the young men would stop the men passing by and tell them to go here or there—here if he was small and there if he was not. I had recently been released from prison, but I was still stout. I didn't look emaciated at all.

They were determining my fitness for military service, and since my hair was cut short they asked, "Where are you from?" Having short hair usually means you've been in the army, or you are a deserter. They were suspicious.

"Where are you from? Aren't you a deserter?" they asked.

Nowadays there are ways to find out if someone is a deserter or not, but back then who knew?

"Where did I come from? North Korea, of course," I answered.

"North Korea?" they responded.

Because of my short hair, they thought I was a spy. At that time, everyone was fleeing for safety and you could not tell spies and soldiers from ordinary people, so they thought I was a spy.

But the man questioning me felt that if he took me in and I turned out not to be a spy, he would lose his job, so after examining me, he pronounced me Class C. In other words, he stamped me as having failed. After that, wherever I went

<sup>5</sup> The public gardens of a historic palace in Seoul



**A woman scavenging for subsistence in Seoul, November 1950. The following month, Father reached the city, pushing Mr. Park on a bicycle.**

everything was all right, because that certificate was an identification paper (the only one I had) and being Class C, I was allowed to pass anywhere I went.

Afterward, I was registered as a resident of South Korea and everything was fine for while until problems arose and I was confined in prison.<sup>6</sup> How hard do you think they investigated to implicate me in all kinds of ways? They said, "Oh, he evaded military service. Does he claim he was categorized Class C?" Did he steal the Class C certificate, or did he just pick it up off the ground? Do you think they could implicate me? All kinds of harsh rumors began. Three months later I was found innocent and acquitted.

### Bartering for food

We came to a farmhouse in North Gyeongsang Province<sup>7</sup> that it seemed the tenants had fled. We went in and found an old woman and two middle-aged women. We told them we were passing by. It was January. We offered to sell them our bed-covers, which we were tired of lugging around. We told them

<sup>6</sup> The South Korean government incarcerated Father July 4–October 4, 1955. For more, see the October 2000 issue, "Behind the Walls of Seodaemun Prison."

<sup>7</sup> A large east-coast province whose northern border lies just south of South Korea's midpoint



**Father's small band of followers struggled to find food on their way south. Many farmers had had to abandon their fields and flee for safety; Left: Spreading manure over a barley field during the war; Right: Harvesting grain in November 1950**



The bedcovers would have only weighed us down on our way to Busan. There was no ready-to-be-cooked rice to be found then. We husked it by stamping on it until we were bathed in sweat. We decided we would eat our fill of it. So we cooked all of the rice and made rice cakes, which the three of us sat down and ate. We left only about a bowl of rice, which we gave to the landlady. We had had so little to eat for so long, so we ate to our hearts' content.

Can you believe that? I was given rice cakes and chicken in situations like that many times. It happens even now, too.

### The first song I heard in South Korea (in Gyeongju)

Next, I wondered, now that I am in South Korea, who will I hear sing? Then, when I saw a boy coming out of a factory where he worked, I asked him to sing, so that I could hear my first song in South Korea. He sang a song for me, which I can still remember. The first song I ever heard in South Korea was... Would you like me to sing it? I won't, because I know you'll like it too much!

## Getting a free ride in a freight car from Ulsan to Busan

After that, we rode on everything we could, whether it was a locomotive, a passenger car or a freight train. I saw a freight train, and we got on it. Which part of the train do you think we rode on? We rode in the locomotive. If we fought with the conductor in the front, we would be pushed back, but we could still ride in the rear. We told him that we didn't expect any favors. We said he would need us when he offloaded freight, so he should let us ride next to him. If he didn't, we would then insist that he let us stay anyway. If that didn't work, there was a bumper at the very front of the locomotive, and we would sit up there.

Overall, it took us two months to reach Busan from Pyongyang.

Which district of Busan did we come to? It was Choryang 1-dong. That place brings back memories. Now it seems deep in the past.

I arrived there on January 27, 1951. It seems like yesterday that I stepped off the train at Choryang Station, but a long time has passed since then. At that time, how old was I? I was thirty-one. I was very young. **TW**

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