

Something to Pray About

May 2012 – Cindy Sears

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new. —2 Cor. 5:17 NKJV

In Memoriam

Charles W. Colson: 1973-2012; Died 3:12 p.m., April 21, 2012; 80 years old.

I'm sure if you have any math ability at all, you can figure out that if Colson was born in 1973, he would not be 80 years old in 2012. His physical birth date was 1931, but Chuck (as he was known), did not really begin to live until he answered God's call and was "born again" in 1973.

People born after the 1960's may not recognize Colson's name, unless they have a vague memory from a history lesson on "Watergate." Colson was known as President Richard Nixon's "hatchet man," referred to as an "evil genius," and, according to a 1974 Times article, "he was probably more disliked, as well as feared, than any other White House aide." The Watergate affair eventually brought down the whole Nixon administration, and Colson entered a plea of guilty to obstruction of justice in a related case where Colson had helped plan a burglary to acquire papers that would discredit Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg had leaked some Pentagon papers to the press in his campaign to stop the Vietnam War effort.

Around this time, Colson, who was a nominal Episcopalian and attended mass with his Catholic wife, Patty, announced that he had accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior—he was "born again." Many "greeted Colson's transformation with cynicism and disbelief, justified by his unsavory past." (Time, Inc. 1974) Some wondered if he was claiming to be "born again" to stay out of prison. If he was, it didn't work. Colson entered Maxwell Federal Prison Camp in Alabama in 1974 and served 7 months of a 1-3-year sentence. He was also disbarred as a lawyer.

At the time, I remember praying that he really was saved. The subsequent years have proven that he was. Even his worst enemies know that he became a different person after his conversion. In prison, Colson could have started a pity party. But what did he do? He learned to lean on Jesus and to pray. Colson saw firsthand the misery of prisoners, who were not only incarcerated physically, but imprisoned by sin and guilt, too. He saw what was going on in the prison system, and vowed to do something to help prisoners and their families when he was released. He kept that promise.

For many years, I financially and prayerfully supported *Prison Fellowship*, Colson's organization to tell prisoners about Christ and work toward better conditions in prisons. PF is present in 113 countries in the world now. In 1983, Colson began *Justice Fellowship* to work for criminal justice reform. In 1991, he began his *Breakpoint* radio broadcasts where he commented on today's news and trends from a Christian perspective. He also began the *Colson Center* to promote a Christian world view in all aspects of life. He was the author of many books, including his autobiography *Born Again*. His last book was titled simply, *The Faith*, a concise look at what Christians believe about God, the world, sin and redemption.

“One of the most wonderful things about being a Christian is that I don’t ever get up in the morning and wonder if what I do matters. I live every day to the fullest because I can **live it through Christ** and I know no matter what I do today, I’m going to do something to advance the kingdom of God.” Charles Colson

I cried when I heard that he had died. Chuck Colson reminded me of the Apostle Paul, who also had a dramatic conversion and spent time in prison. I’m sure that Chuck and Paul are having some riveting conversations now. One day, I will be able to listen in on that and be blessed again by both of them.

In 1973 a Boston Globe commentator wrote, “If Mr. Colson can repent of his sins, there just has to be hope for everybody.”

Thank you, Lord, for proving once again that in Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, You can change anyone and make them a “new creation.” Glory to God in the highest. Amen.

Suggested reading: *Born Again; Loving God; The Faith* by Charles Colson. Learn more about Colson’s work for the kingdom at: www.colsoncenter.org; www.breakpoint.org; www.prisonfellowship.org and www.justicefellowship.org.