

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 391

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about Chuck Colson, his conversion to Christ, and the resurrection of Jesus. Chuck said: *"I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world-and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible."*

Since Colson died ten years ago (April 21, 2012) you might not be familiar with him. He was famous in a previous generation as Special Counsel to President Richard Nixon. He served in this position from 1969-1970. At that time he was a devious individual known as Nixon's "Hatchet Man". Colson later admitted that he was: *"valuable to the President ... because I was willing ... to be ruthless in getting things done"*. David Plotz described him as Nixon's *"hard man, the 'evil genius' of an evil administration."* He was one of the "Watergate Seven" and was the first member of the Nixon administration to go to prison for Watergate related charges. He served seven months in the federal Maxwell Prison in Alabama for obstruction of justice.

The early church had a saying that **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15)**. This is precisely what Jesus did for Chuck Colson. As Colson was facing arrest, his close friend Thomas L. Phillips, gave him a copy of *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. After reading this remarkable book Colson gave himself to Christ. His critics considered this another scam to reduce his prison sentence, but his critics were wrong. Colson experienced a true conversion which resulted in a radical change in his life. Here are a few facts that illustrate the reality of his conversion.

- He immediately joined a bi-partisan prayer group of Democratic and Republican congressmen.
- His change was so dramatic and undeniable that his personal memoirs "Born Again" were made into a movie in 1978. He proved what he believed by what he did!
- After his release from prison he founded "Prison Fellowship" which today is the largest outreach to prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families in America.
- In 1979 he founded Prison Fellowship International which now operates in 120 different countries. This is now the largest and most extensive association of national Christian ministries in the world working to help prisoners and their families find Christ.
- In 1983, his ministry received special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.
- During this time, Colson also founded Justice Fellowship pushing for bipartisan, legislative reforms in the U.S. criminal justice system.
- Some asked: "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" Obviously, Colson left behind a rich legacy to prove his faithfulness to Christ!

On June 18, 2003, Colson was invited by President George W. Bush to the White House to present results of a scientific study on faith based prison ministries. Dr. Byron Johnson of the University of Pennsylvania was the principal researcher. Johnson explained that 171 participants in the faith based initiative were compared to a matched group of 1,754 inmates in the general prison population. The study found that the recidivism rate among released prisoners was reduced by 2/3 in the faith based program. (8% recidivism in the faith based program vs. 20.3 % in the general

population) Jesus said that we would know teachers by their fruit (Matt. 7:16). Obviously, Colson's fruit was good!

The Scriptures teach that we are to give honor to whom honor is due (Rom. 13:7). Here are a few of the honors bestowed upon Chuck Colson. He received a number of honorary doctorates from a variety of universities. In 1990 the Salvation Army gave him their highest civic award. In 1993 Colson received the Templeton Prize for advancing the cause of religion. This included a cash gift of over \$ 1 million. Colson donated this to the Prison Fellowship together with all of the money he received from speaking fees and royalties from books. In 1994, Colson was quoted in Steven Curtis Chapman's song "Heaven in the Real World" as saying: "*Where is the hope? I meet millions of people who feel demoralized by the decay around us. The hope that each of us has is not in who governs us, or what laws we pass, or what great things we do as a nation. Our hope is in the power of God working through the hearts of people. And that's where our hope is in this country. And that's where our hope is in life.*" In fact, as you know, the Bible teaches that we are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24).

With regard to the resurrection of Jesus a famous homicide detective, J. Warner Wallace, agrees with Colson and lists 5 things necessary for a successful conspiracy: (1) A small number of conspirators. (2) Thorough and immediate communication between conspirators. (3) A short time span of exposure. (4) A strong bond between conspirators. (5) Little or no pressure to tell the truth.

As you can see, none of the five apply to Christianity. (1) There were many witnesses who claimed to have seen the resurrected Christ. In fact, Jesus appeared to over 500 witnesses at the same time (1 Cor. 15:6). (2) These many witnesses had no way to effectively communicate with one another. (3) The time between the resurrection of Jesus and the death of the last witness was over 60 years. (4) The apostles were not supportive of one another but were constantly arguing about which of them was the greatest. (5) All of the apostles, and hundreds of other witnesses, were persecuted for believing in the resurrection! No jury would ever conclude "beyond a reasonable doubt" that these hundreds of witnesses all conspired together to lie about the resurrection!

Here, in Chuck's own words, is something for all of us to ponder: "*But all at once I realized that it was not my success God had used to enable me to help those in this prison, or in hundreds of others just like it. My life of success was not what made this morning so glorious -- all my achievements meant nothing in God's economy. 'No, the real legacy of my life was my biggest failure -- that I was an ex-convict. My greatest humiliation -- being sent to prison -- was the beginning of God's greatest use of my life; He chose the one thing in which I could not glory for His glory.'*"

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce