



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRISON FELLOWSHIP BEGINS WEEK LONG MINISTRY IN STATE'S PRISON SYSTEM

Parchman—Former Nixon aide and founder of Prison Fellowship ministries Charles “Chuck” Colson visited with more than 3500 inmates at the Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) on Friday, August 17. Colson’s *Operation Starting Line (OSL)* ministry for offenders is a national faith-based prison outreach project. Its mission is designed to present a message of change to imprisoned men and women across America. Colson’s Prison Fellowship is working in collaboration with more than a dozen other national religious organizations in its outreach to prisoners. OSL will visit 40 different correctional facilities in Mississippi during the week of August 16-22.

A delegation of over 200 volunteers, including ministers, lay speakers, entertainers, ex-offenders, comedians, sports figures, and body builders, assisted Colson in his daylong crusade at the Parchman, Miss., prison. Colson, who served 7 months in prison for obstruction of justice in the Watergate scandal, carried his message of repentance directly to inmates at the state prison and personally visited and spoke with prisoners assigned to housing units 4, 17, and 29B.

Colson stated, “We came to the Mississippi State Penitentiary to get word of the gospel to every prisoner at Parchman and indeed throughout the state. We are grateful for the wonderful cooperation of the Mississippi Department of Corrections for enabling us to reach every corner of the prison so that prisoners can hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.”

“One part of the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) mission is to provide treatment programs for substance abuse as well as educational and job skills opportunities. For many inmates religious opportunities help them in their personal dedication to reformation,” said MDOC Commissioner Robert L. Johnson. “Operation Starting Line provides testimony of encouragement and personal struggle through a life of crime from former felons that offenders can relate to and hopefully learn from.”

OSL volunteers ministered to inmates at most of the housing units throughout the day. The day’s activities concluded with a large outdoor revival held at the prison’s rodeo. Over 550 minimum and medium security inmates attended the evening program. More than half of the prison’s nearly 5300 inmates were provided ministry by the volunteers of OSL.

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