

# A Pardon Refused

Isaiah 55:6-7

Introduction: In 1829, two men robbed a United States mail carrier in Pennsylvania. The men were tried on six indictments that included robbery and murder. George Wilson and James Porter were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. However, a petition for pardon was made on George Wilson's behalf by some of his influential friends. President Andrew Jackson was agreeable and granted a formal pardon to Wilson. Incredibly, **Wilson refused the pardon!**

This had never happened before. No one had ever declined a presidential pardon much less for an offense that did not carry the death penalty. What were they to do with a man who preferred to die on the gallows?

The case reached the Supreme Court. Chief Justice John Marshall ruled, "A pardon is an act of grace, proceeding from the power entrusted with the execution of the laws, which exempts the individual, on whom it is bestowed, from punishment the law inflicts for a crime he has committed... A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is essential; and delivery is not completed without acceptance. It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if it be rejected, we have discovered no power in a court to force it on him... It may be supposed that no being condemned to death would reject a pardon, but the rule must be the same in capital cases and in misdemeanors."

George Wilson was hung until dead on the gallows! But why did he die? Did Wilson die because of the crimes he committed or was it because he refused the pardon?

I. All crimes are sins.

A. We have all sinned (Rom. 3:10, 23; Isa. 64:6; 1 John 1:8).

B. It is certainly within the laws of the land to determine the consequences of certain sins (Rom. 13:1-5).

C. However, God has declared that the consequence of all sin is death (Rom. 5:12; 6:23).

II. We all need a pardon from the sentence of death.

A. The Lord wants to extend a pardon to everyone but it is conditional (2 Pet. 3:9). It must be accepted!

B. His pardon requires belief (John 3:18, 36). We all live with a death sentence.

C. His pardon requires confession (Rom. 10:9-10).

D. His pardon requires repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

E. His pardon requires faithful service (Rev. 2:10; Rom. 10:17). Even in the face of persecution, the Lord grants a pardon!

III. Many Christians are not unlike George Wilson.

A. Wilson was offered a pardon. Likewise, Christians have been offered a pardon (John 1:12; 6:37).

B. Wilson refused his pardon. Likewise, many Christians refuse their pardon (Heb. 2:1-3; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; Rom. 8:12-13).

Conclusion: We would all agree that George Wilson was a fool. Who in their right mind would pass on a chance to be pardoned? Unfortunately, many Christians are foolish (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Wilson did not die because he committed some crime; he died because he rejected his pardon. In the end, those of us who have but on Christ in baptism won't have died because we were sinners, but because we foolishly rejected the pardon that the Lord was so willing to give to all those who seek His grace.

Justice John Marshall was right. "A pardon is an act of grace, proceeding from the power entrusted with the execution of the laws, which exempts the individual, on whom it is bestowed, from punishment the law inflicts for a crime he has committed... It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered."

Have you rejected God's pardon (Isa. 55:6-7)? Are you living in sin? Are you willing to accept His pardon to have your sins removed?