

The Tragedy of a Pardon Refused

Acts 10:34-43

In 1833 George Wilson was convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail in Pennsylvania and sentenced to death. Due to his friends' influence, Wilson was pardoned by Andrew Jackson. Wilson, however, refused the pardon. The Supreme Court was thus asked to rule on the case. The decision was that if the prisoner does not accept the pardon, it is not in effect: "A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is essential, and delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if it is rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him." Wilson was hanged.

The living God, based on the cross-work of His beloved Son, has made it possible for God to remain righteous, and at the same time justify [declare righteous] the ungodly sinner: "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). Christ died as a Substitute for all humanity (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 John 2:2). Based on Christ's finished work at Calvary, God offers a full and free pardon to every sinner on planet earth. The only condition is that the offer must be accepted, and the guilty must receive Jesus Christ and trust in Him and in Him alone.

You would think that guilty men and women who are sentenced to death (Rom. 1:29-32; 6:23) would greatly rejoice in such an offer and receive it at once. But tragically, the great majority of hell-bound sinners refuse the God-offered pardon and choose instead to remain in their sins (John 8:24) and face their certain doom. How foolish not to receive God's gracious and complete forgiveness: "whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

~George Zeller: www.middletonbiblechurch.org



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