

Early in the nineteenth century, a man named George Wilson killed a government employee who caught him robbing the mail. The courts tried Wilson, convicted him, and sentenced him to be hanged. Then President Andrew Jackson sent him a pardon. For some reason, Wilson refused to accept the pardon. No one knew what to do.

Finally, the US Supreme Court had to settle the matter. Chief Justice Marshall wrote the decision: "A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged." And he was.

The pardon God offers is the same way. It is a gift, but it must be accepted.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom.6:23)

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but not everyone accepts him as Savior.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:11-12)

With salvation such a wonderful gift of God, why do you suppose so many people refuse it? (Give opportunity for response to the question.) Perhaps human pride makes some try to earn the gift. Perhaps others are unwilling to admit that they have sin that earns the death penalty. There may be other reasons suggested.

Heavenly Father, thank you for our Lord Jesus. Thank you for the gift of life in him. We do accept his pardon instead of the death we deserve.