

Some thoughts to consider . . .

A Pardon Rejected

During the presidency of Andrew Jackson, George Wilson robbed a federal payroll from a train and in the process killed a guard. The court convicted him and sentenced him to hang. Because of public sentiment against capital punishment, however, a movement began to secure a presidential pardon for Wilson, and eventually Jackson intervened with a pardon. Amazingly, Wilson refused it.

Since this had never happened before, the Supreme Court was asked to rule on whether someone could indeed refuse a presidential pardon. Chief Justice John Marshall handed down the court's decision: "A pardon is a parchment whose only value must be determined by the receiver of the pardon. It has no value apart from that which the receiver gives to it. George Wilson has refused to accept the pardon. We cannot conceive why he would do so, but he has. Therefore, George Wilson must die." "Pardon," declared the Supreme Court, "must not only be granted, it must be accepted." George Wilson, as punishment for his crime, was hanged.

Likewise, God, through His mercy, has provided every human being pardon from their sins. However, that pardon must be accepted in the way God has ordained. Those who do not accept the pardon will perish.

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Can We Be Saved Like the Thief on the Cross?

Have you ever heard someone say, "I just want to be saved like the thief on the cross"? Many people believe that to be saved, we should just imitate this famous

thief. Is that so? Should we try to be saved like he was? Is it even possible?

First, we must ask: why is this thief (from Luke 23:39-43) such a popular character to try to imitate? Why not teach what Jesus told the rich young ruler: to keep the Ten Commandments and give away his earthly possessions to the poor (Luke 18:18-23) to inherit eternal life? Why not imitate the woman in Luke 7:37-50 who washed Jesus' feet with hair and perfume and was forgiven of her sins? Are these people appropriate examples to show us how we should be saved?

In fact, none of these people, not even the thief, shows us how to be saved today. We live under the requirements of the New Testament, which were not in force when the ruler, the woman, and the thief lived. When we use the term "New Testament," we are comparing Jesus' teaching to a testament, or a will, which describes how one's possessions should be administered after his death. Hebrews 9:15-17 describes the New Testament exactly in this way. Especially notice verse 16, which says that for a testament to be in force, its author must die. It is of no effect while its author lives. Just so with the New Testament—it took effect when Jesus died, and not before.

While we are alive, we may administer our affairs as we wish. When we die, our wills take effect. The New Testament is the same way — its Author, Jesus Christ, forgave sins under many circumstances while He was alive on the earth. After His death, forgiveness is available through His will, recorded in the New Testament. Neither Adam, Moses, the rich young ruler, nor the famous thief on the cross lived under the Last Will and Testament of Jesus. None of

them was a part of the church, the body of Christ, where salvation is found today (Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:23). None of them could believe in or confess faith in the resurrection (Romans 10:9-10) for it had not happened yet. None of them is our example.

We do not know how the thief on the cross first came to know about Jesus, or to learn about His kingdom. We do not know whether he heard the gospel and repented before his execution, though we know that many sinners did (Mark 1:4-5). But we know that he is not our example. If you want to be saved today, learn from those who lived after Jesus' death, under the same Will and Testament that instructs us all today.

- by Erin Percell

The Bible on Acceptable Worship

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Man must worship God. Worship is the expression of adoration, reverence and devotion. Worship may take numerous forms, but acceptable worship will take the forms prescribed by God. Jesus quoted Isaiah in Matthew 15:9, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

Acceptable worship, as it is described by Jesus' statement in John 4:24, must be in spirit and truth. The instruction that we should worship in spirit is instruction demanding our minds, our attention, to that

which we do. No mechanical recitation of prayer, no thoughtless singing of spiritual songs, no inattentive eating of the elements of the Lord's Supper: but concentration on that assigned significance of the thing being done, understanding that prayer is made TO GOD, that songs are being sung to make melody WITH THE HEART, that the elements of the Supper are to bring to mind the death of the Son of God. Yes, worship must be in spirit.

According to John 4:24, worship must also be in truth. God has not left us to ad lib our adoration, reverence and devotion. He has told us what to do and how to do it. He has given instruction, for instance, regarding our worship in the Lord's Supper, as to when and how often (Acts 20:7). He has given instruction regarding our worship in song, in prayer, and in giving of our means. And those who worship in truth will obey Him.

It does not matter if "it seems good to me." God is Spirit, and only as He reveals Himself can we know what is good to Him.

- by Patrick Farish

Pardon My Intrusion

Please pardon my intrusion into your life. I cannot honestly regard it as an intrusion at all, but that you so consider it is painfully obvious. My object is not to waste your time, or rob your pleasures, or thwart your plans, or interrupt your schedule or interfere with your life - as you think - BUT TO SAVE YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL. And you do have a soul - an inward man, a spirit made in God's image, never ending, destined to spend eternity in hell or heaven.

Your life tells me that you have time for other matters - your job, your family, your body, your pleasures - but none for your soul. Your schedule tells me that you are interested in other realms - business, fam-

ily, education, civic, social - but not in the spiritual. Then when I try to visit with you and to talk with you about God, Christ, the Bible, and your salvation, when I try to get you interested in your own soul, you seek to make me feel like I am imposing. Your conduct and your attitude speak clearly: "Leave me alone. Stop bothering me. I wish you wouldn't come to my house. Get out of my life and get off my back." But I can't do that until I have exhausted all efforts and am convinced that it's hopeless. If your soul isn't on your conscience, it is on mine. God wants me to care - and to try.

- by Bill Crews

The Simple Gospel Plan of Salvation

- Hear the truth
- Romans 10:17
- Believe the truth
- Hebrews 11:6
- Repent of sins
- Luke 13:3
- Confess faith in Jesus
- Romans 10:10
- Be baptized
- Acts 2:38
- Live & serve faithfully
- Rev. 2:10

***We invite you to visit with us
at your earliest opportunity.***

***We look forward to seeing
you!***