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from the cross of Calvary, but that is not an accurate assessment of what transpired. *“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do’”* (Luke 23:34). Jesus prayed to the Father that His killers would be forgiven, but He did not grant them automatic forgiveness. Please, consider the difference. Whether or not they would receive forgiveness depended on how they responded to the gospel. By the mercy of God, some of His murderers did get their sins remitted, but there was a process to that.

When the apostle Peter preached on Pentecost Day in Jerusalem, he told his audience that they were personally responsible for murdering God's Son. *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know — Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death”* (Acts 2:22-23). He was still speaking to that same crowd when he continued: *“Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”* Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, *‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’* Then Peter said to them, *‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’* And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, *‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’* Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (36-41). Again, Peter directly blamed his hearers for crucifying the Son of God. They could have taken offense that a preacher would dare shame them publicly for their sins, but they knew better. They were ashamed of themselves and convicted in their hearts, assured of their guilt. They needed to know what to do, so they asked, and he answered: Repentance and Baptism would remit their sins. Telling them they still needed to be saved, they accepted what he said willingly and submitted to baptism. As a result, thousands of souls were saved.

What Jesus Christ prayed for from the cross, that those who murdered Him would be forgiven, did, in fact, come to pass! Nevertheless, it was not an automatic forgiveness they received simply because He prayed. Rather, they had to hear the gospel preached, be persuaded

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*and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do”* (Colossians 3:12-13). *“Longsuffering”* means exactly what it sounds like: to suffer long. The Greek word from which it is translated is defined by Thayer as: Patience, Endurance, Perseverance, and Slowness in Avenging Wrongs. *“Bearing with”*, or *“forbearing”* in other versions, is defined by Strong as: Put up with. Longsuffering and forbearance are the qualities of character that allow a Christian to forgive others. These qualities must always precede forgiveness and need to last until forgiveness is possible. The one who desires the forgiveness of those who have harmed him, but still awaits their repentance is not bearing a grudge, grinding an ax, or pursuing revenge; rather, he is suffering long and forbearing, which are traits of true godliness.

God's goodness is manifested through the forbearance and longsuffering that lead sinners to repent so that they can be saved! *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”* (Romans 2:4) *“The Lord is... longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9). These characteristics should be reflected in His people, as well.

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*‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord’*” (Acts 22:4-16). Stephen prayed for his killers to be free from the sin of murdering him and at least one of them, Saul of Tarsus, was forgiven by the Lord. However, Stephen did not personally forgive Saul or any of those who hurled stones at him or falsely accused him. He prayed it would happen, but could not do it himself because the requisite repentance had not occurred.

A Christian is not free in Christ to forgive anyone without the offender first repenting, as Jesus preached, *“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him”* (Luke 17:3-4). The goal is to forgive a wrongdoer, but that is at the end of the process. When one is sinned against, the offended party is commanded by Christ to rebuke the offender, which means he is to inform him of his fault. The expectation is that the offender will then repent, which means turn away from his wrongdoing. Following repentance by the offender, the offended party must then forgive him. If repentance is not forthcoming, then neither should forgiveness be forthcoming.

Some fear that withholding forgiveness from an offender who refuses to repent would cause the offended party to be guilty of being *“unforgiving.”* The Holy Spirit does warn about this, saying through the pen of the apostle Paul: *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be [among other things] unforgiving... having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:1-5). One who is unforgiving is a perilous person, who denies the power of godliness, and who deserves to be shunned. There is a difference, though, between one who will not forgive because he is spiteful and vengeful and one who cannot forgive because the conditions for forgiveness have not been met.

What can a person who has been wronged and wants to forgive the wrongdoer do until the wrongdoer repents? He must practice longsuffering and forbearance! *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy*

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of whom Jesus is and convicted of their own sins. They had to obey what they were commanded to do – namely, to repent and to be baptized. Only then was His prayer fulfilled.

Something similar happened when the first Christian to suffer martyrdom was being stoned to death. *“When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep”* (Acts 7:54-60). Like Jesus before him, Stephen requested the forgiveness of his murderers. He did not forgive them, himself, but asked the Lord to do so. Their forgiveness was possible, but neither automatic, nor immediate.

Of those involved in stoning Stephen to death, the only person named was *“a young man named Saul.”* Concerning this *“Saul, also called Paul”* (Acts 13:9), Stephen’s prayer was answered affirmatively. Observe Paul’s own words: *“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. So I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.’ And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me,*

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## ***"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"***

***ACTS 16:30***

**LEARN THE GOSPEL**  
John 6:45; Romans 10:17

**BELIEVE IN CHRIST**  
Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

**CONFESS CHRIST**  
Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

**REPENT OF SIN**  
Acts 3:19; 17:30

**BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**  
Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

**REMAIN STEADFAST**  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

## ***"THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER"***

***HEBREWS 10:24-25***

**SUNDAY**  
Worship @ 10:00 a.m.  
Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

**WEDNESDAY**  
Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard  
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.  
Members Expected.

## ***"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN ANY TRESPASS... RESTORE SUCH A ONE"***

***GALATIANS 6:1***

**CONFESS TRESPASSES**  
James 5:16; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9

**REPENT OF SIN**  
Acts 8:22

**PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS**  
Acts 8:22

**REMAIN STEADFAST**  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

## ***"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN"***

***PROVERBS 25:11***

"God sends no one away empty  
except those who are full of  
themselves."

## ***GIVE ME THE BIBLE***

KDNF 840AM  
Sunday @ 9:00 a.m.

# ***"WHOLE COUNSEL"***

***ACTS 20:27***

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**SEPTEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2025**

## **FORGIVENESS IS NOT AUTOMATIC**

Bryan Matthew Dockens

One week ago, Erika Kirk told an audience of 60,000+ gathered at State Farm Stadium in Arizona and at least 20 million more watching online, "That man... that young man, I forgive him", referring to her late husband's assassin Tyler James Robinson. Charlie Kirk was shot in the neck eleven days earlier.

Five months ago, Jeff Metcalf responded to his 17-year-old son's stabbing death by Karmelo Anthony at a high school football game, "I already forgive this person. Already." That was five days after Austin Metcalf's murder.

It has become common for well-meaning people to immediately and unconditionally pardon the most heinous sins without awaiting any expression of remorse whatsoever on the part of the perpetrators.

Christ Jesus very clearly taught that no one can expect to receive forgiveness from God who does not also forgive his fellow man (Matthew 18:21-35). As seriously important as it is to forgive others, sadly, what Jesus taught and practiced in this regard has been exaggerated, taken to an extreme He never intended. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, both the servant and the one who owed him asked for patience from their respective creditors.

It is often said that Jesus of Nazareth forgave His killers as He hung  
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