

A GOD OF (NOT QUITE) INFINITE PATIENCE

Reflect on your own patience.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 – where “1” is “not at all” and “10” is “extremely!” – how *patient* are you with others?
2. In what circumstances would you be “1”?

Openly escalating his conflict with Jewish leadership, Jesus tells an incendiary parable. Read Luke 29:9-18. This is no less than an allegory of God’s history with Israel, in which generations of prophets were sent to warn the people, and to return them to devotion to YHWH. Generations of prophets who were mishandled, ignored and vilified. And now here comes the Son and Heir, Jesus himself, who will be killed. The message is clear enough.

3. What has the Lord spoken clearly to you – whether directly or through another – that you have openly resisted?

Marvelling at God’s incredible grace and enduring love, we tend to imagine Him to be endlessly patient with our rebellious ways. But this story speaks of a reckoning. Those who know better will be judged according to whether they lived from that knowledge. It’s no use pretending that you don’t know, or retconning the past so as to claim you never knew at all.

Example: read Numbers 14:21-23. The backstory: Joshua, Caleb and 10 tribal leaders visit the promised land, and come back to report. All of them “know” that it is a land of milk and honey and giant grapes and green pastures – a great place to live. All of them “know” also that the cities are heavily fortified and the defenders strong. Joshua and Caleb choose to speak from what they already **knew**, however: that the Lord is strong for his people, has promised the land, and will lead them to victory. This knowledge trumps all others. But the remaining leaders “forget” this knowledge, and speak instead from what they know of fortified cities and strong defenders. Persuading Israel to be afraid, they incur judgement. The generation that should have known better will die in the wilderness, says the Lord. The people as a whole will be pardoned – the covenant will go on, the promise will be fulfilled – but this generation will be lost.

4. Consider the challenges you face. What “knowledge” do you have from what you see? How does it encourage you to act?
5. What does your “prior knowledge” about the Lord tell you to do?

Pray the truth with someone you trust – what you have known of the Lord as Saviour and Commander – then pray for the way ahead.