

## Analysis of Luke 18 ( comments in blue)

### Interpretation 1                      Luke 18.1-8

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples a parable **to show them that they should always pray and not give up.** *[they should keep praying to God until they get what they want ?]* <sup>2</sup> He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ <sup>4</sup> “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’ ”

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him **day and night**? Will he keep putting them off? *[No if they keep on at him day and night he will eventually hear them ]* <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.

I don’t know how the Church interprets this passage but some time back there was a “national prayer weekend” where the idea seemed to be that if enough people prayed for long enough God might sort out our country's problems so I assume the Church interprets it as above – i.e. that prolonged prayer by as many as possible is what is most affective to get a response from God. The passage does however seem strange in that it likens God to an **unjust** Judge and there is apparently no reason for Jesus to be disparaging about the judge in the first place. A conscientious judge who had many calls upon his time would be more appropriate. The words “and quickly” seem inappropriate/redundant.

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**Interpretation 2** If you simply look at what Jesus said on its own it appears to reverse the meaning:

### Luke 18.2-8

<sup>2</sup> [Jesus] said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. *[not a very nice man then!]* <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ <sup>4</sup> “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’ ” *[so he isn’t doing it through compassion or because it is the right thing to do he just wants her off his back]*

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “Listen to what the **unjust** judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off *[like the uncaring Judge]* *[the answer is no?]*” <sup>8</sup> I tell you, **he** will see that they get justice, **and quickly.** *[unlike the uncaring Judge]*

In this interpretation the reason Jesus is disparaging towards the judge is because he wants to **contrast** how the judge reacts with how God reacts. Now the words “and quickly” are key while the words “day and night” are less so - “day **or** night” would be more appropriate.

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If one delves a little deeper :

**Wikipedia.** “The author of Luke used the Gospel of Mark as a source for the narrative of Christ's earthly life, and likely used a hypothetical sayings collection called the Q source for Jesus' teachings”. “The most probable date for the composition of Luke’s gospel is

around AD 80–110, and there is evidence that it was still being **revised** well into the 2nd century”. “Original copies of Luke and the other Gospels have not been preserved, as is typical for ancient documents; the texts that survive are third-generation copies, with no two completely identical” “The oldest complete texts are the 4th century” – This is when the New testament was put together and what texts went into it, and those which were rejected were chosen by the Church.

Another document on line – a study of the Q source states: “During the second century, when the canonizing process was taking place, scribes did not make new copies of Q, [hence it has not survived] since the canonizing process involved choosing what should and what should not be used by the church. Hence they preferred to make copies of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, where the sayings of Jesus from Q were **rephrased** to avoid misunderstandings, and to fit their own situations and **their understanding of what Jesus had really meant**”.

Why does the author of the Gospel feel a need to explain what Jesus really means? My suspicion is that what it said was at odds with the current thinking of the church. A little editing of text to make it suit is therefore not unexpected and someone presumed to add an interpretation “**to show them that they should always pray and not give up**”. I go with interpretation 2 which sits far more comfortably with:

**Matthew 6** <sup>7</sup>*And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.* <sup>8</sup>*Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

**Does it matter?** Not really. God is totally beyond our understanding and our relationship with Him works because He understands us not because we understand Him (or have need to) but to me the idea that the God who created the vastness of the universe and the wondrous intricacies of the processes of “life” needs nagging before he will do something makes no sense and is inconsistent with the idea of a loving God.

John Kennaugh