

Title: ELITES AND INFIDELS, LUKE 18:9-14.  
(Chatham, NJ; 10/24/10, AM) [D – Contrast]

Theme: The story of the two men praying demonstrates that sometimes the elites of religious society are in reality the infidels and the infidels are the elites.

Purpose: To demonstrate what it takes to be acceptable to God.

Introduction:

1. The Gospel of Luke gives us a lot of stories about people who acquire God's favor but don't seem to be the types who should have received it.
2. We know from Matthew and Luke that those who hearkened to John's message were not the elite religious leaders; see Mt. 3:7-10; 21:31-32 & Luke 3:10-14.
3. Luke also gives us the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan leper, and the persistent widow.
4. All of them exhibit the necessary traits and spiritual virtues that endear them to God.
5. In this present lesson we learn of the contrast between an elite and an infidel, but the story turns on deciphering who is the elite and who is the infidel.

#### I. Old Testament Writings that Informed the Tax Collector

##### A. Proverbs 3:34

1. God gives favor to the humble.
2. James 4:6 reminds his hearers of the same thing.
3. Wisdom grows from trusting God, not ourselves, Prov. 3:5-7.

##### B. Psalm 32

1. In verses 1-5 David extols the man who receives forgiveness.
2. He describes inner turmoil when he refuses to see his sin and peace when he admits it.
3. Considering how many times Israel sinned and repented the tax collector could not escape thinking about his own sins.

##### C. Micah 5:8

1. Act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.
2. Perhaps his own unjust tax-collecting ways lead him to humble himself.

#### II. Old Testament Writings that the Pharisee Should Have Known

##### A. It was good that he sought to be holy.

1. God demands separation from uncleanness, Lev. 19:2.
2. The impulse to avoid idolatry after the captivity drove the community to seek separation and holiness.

##### B. He should have remembered other passages.

1. Election as a chosen one not based on the might as a nation, Deut. 7:6-8
2. Also not because of their righteousness, Deut. 9:4-6
3. God's faithfulness to his promise to Abraham provided the foundation.
4. He had no excuse for not knowing the weightier matters of the law, Lev. 19:18.
5. Certainly he should have known the same passages as tax collector.

#### III. New Testament Writings that Inform Justification (the tax collector went home justified)

##### A. Titus 3:4-7

1. "Goodness and loving kindness of God appeared" – in the Gospel
2. Saved not by our works but according to God's mercy (echoes of Ps. 51:1)
3. Justified by grace through the washing of the Holy Spirit

4. He urges them to be devoted to good works (8), but this is based on the grace they have already received.

B. Romans 2-3

1. All have sinned, 3:23.
2. Jews have sinned with the Law; Gentiles have sinned without it (chapter 2).
3. Justification demands that we admit our sins – like the tax collector but unlike the Pharisee.

C. Romans 7:21 – 8:4.

1. A battle waged by sinful desires against us
2. Christ is the solution to the conflict.
3. Weakened by the flesh we cannot overcome sin by ourselves.
4. Only by the death of Christ is the righteous requirement of the law met.
5. We are humbled by this because no effort of ours will suffice no matter how hard we try.
6. Because we humble ourselves, we are exalted (Luke 18:14).

Conclusion:

1. And yet, like Paul, we rejoice. We are justified before God when we depend on his mercy.
2. This and the attitude of the tax collector create a unique situation.
3. The religious elite of the story thinks of all others as infidels, whereas the infidel of the story admits his unworthiness.
4. Unique is the fact that the alleged infidel goes home justified; he sees himself with the rest of humanity and does not elevate himself above them.
5. This attitude of humility creates a new religious environment where the humble sinners become the ones who are right with God and not the self-righteous elite.
6. It is with a foundation of humility that Paul calls the church to live a life worthy of our calling, Ephesians 4:1-2.
7. If you have entered here today fully aware of your unworthiness, then you may leave justified before God.
8. You must, however, humbly submit to the will of God in the Gospel of Christ.