

presence of God (2 Corinthians 5:8) **"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."** (Matthew 25:46) **"And these [unbelievers] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."**

6. The Debilitation – “you cannot; neither can they”

a. It debilitates (weakens) those wishing to help.

- 1) Jesus quoted Abraham saying, **“They which would pass from hence to you cannot.”**
- 2) If the saints in Paradise then or heaven now should wish to try to rescue loved ones in hell, they will not be able to cross the gulf.
- 3) One comfort is that once glorified, the saints will see perfectly God’s righteous judgment upon sinners and will agree with God. We will not weep eternally for the lost. God will dry our tears. (Revelation 21:4) **"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."**

b. It debilitates (weakens) those wishing to escape.

- 1) The great gulf weakens the efforts of the suffering in hell from ever being able to attempt a crossing.
- 2) Abraham said, **“Neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”** The rich man, and all who join him in hell, will never have the ability to cross the gulf.

Conclusion: We know that the Bible tells us that hell is eternal, but this verse heightens our awareness of that reality. Our family, friends, co-workers, classmates, and neighbours who have not truly repented and trusted Christ for salvation will be separated from God for all eternity by the great gulf that cannot be crossed. Knowing this, ought to motivate us to pray more fervently for them and witness more fearlessly to them while we can. We need to ask God to give us a greater passion for souls before it is too late. Make a list of unbelievers dear to your heart and begin to pray for them daily, and ask God to give you opportunities and boldness to share Christ with them.

Song: Give Me a Passion for Souls - 306

The Gulf

14 May 2023 PM – Luke 16:26 – Missions – Scott Childs

Introduction: The Sidu River bridge hangs over 1,600 feet (487 m) above the canyon floor. The bridge spans just over 5,000 feet (1.5 km) across the river valley and was so far across that the builders had to use a rocket to string the first pilot line across the gap. This is the highest bridge in the world. The 487 m gulf below the bridge is a LONG way down. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/sidu-river-bridge>

Men have accomplished amazing feats in crossing over such deep gulfs or chasms, but Jesus told of a gulf that no human or even the devil could cross. It is the gulf between heaven and hell.

Transition: The details of this gulf recounted by Jesus, in his true story about the rich man and Lazarus, ought to give us a greater passion for missions and for evangelism.

1. The Devastation – “Beside all this”

a. Beside the thirst and torment (v.24)

- 1) Jesus said that the man in hell was hot, thirsty and tormented in the flames.
- 2) Fires produce tremendous heat. They dry the atmosphere, causing thirst. They burn the flesh when it gets too close. As we all have experienced, burns are extremely painful.
- 3) Jesus gave the devastating news that in addition to the heat, thirst and torment of hell, there was a great gulf.

b. Beside the loss of earthly comforts (v.25)

- 1) The unbelieving rich man had lived in comfort while alive on this earth. Poor Lazarus, the believer, had lived as a ragged, hungry beggar.
- 2) Now their situations had reversed. Lazarus was comforted and the unbeliever endured the torments of fire. This memory and reality would haunt the rich man endlessly.
- 3) Jesus said that, beside the haunting memories and painful torments, there was a great gulf.

2. The Declaration – “there is”

a. Jesus declared that there is a gulf

- 1) This is not the word of an unnamed prophet. It was not

the announcement of Peter or Paul. It was the divine word of Jesus Himself.

- 2) Jesus assured us that there IS a gulf.

b. The gulf exists because God is holy

- 1) God created that gulf because He cannot allow any sin in His presence.
- 2) All through the Bible, God tells us that there is a barrier between Him and sinful humans. When God spoke to Israel from the mount, He commanded, "**And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:**" (Exodus 19:12). God placed a veil between the holy place and the holy of holies in the tabernacle as a separation (Exodus 26:33).
- 3) The gulf that Jesus described is a reality.

3. The Description – “a great gulf”

a. It is a gulf

- 1) This word depicts a wide opening, a chasm or a gaping hollow.
- 2) I have never seen the Grand Canyon, but I have seen photos of it. That great chasm is 29 km wide and 1.8 km deep. That is a big hollow.
- 3) Jesus called the space between Paradise and hell a gulf.

b. It is a GREAT gulf.

- 1) Not only is it a gulf, but it is a GREAT gulf. It is greater in width and greater in depth than the Grand Canyon.
- 2) Because of the overall description of this great gulf, we could safely say that it is too wide to build a bridge across and too deep to ever reach the bottom.

4. The Duration – “fixed”

a. Jesus said that the great gulf was fixed

- 1) The word “fixed” means that this gulf is firmly set and unmovable.
- 2) Nothing would ever change the width and depth of this impassable canyon.
- 3) The duration of that gulf is so firmly established that not

even the Devil himself can cross it or change it.

b. It will last for all eternity.

- 1) When God Almighty finally casts all unbelievers into the Lake of Fire, there will always be a great gulf fixed between that terrible destination and the eternal bliss of heaven.
- 2) Many religions preach that God will give everyone a second chance. Catholics claim there is a purgatory to purge away lesser sins to allow sinners into heaven. Yet, Jesus, God the Son, declared that there is an uncrossable gulf that is eternally fixed.

5. The Division – “between us and you”

a. Abraham told the rich man that the gulf divided between us and you.

- 1) Abraham and Lazarus were in Paradise and the unbelieving rich man was in hell.
- 2) Sheol [hell] in the O.T. and Hades [hell] in the N.T. were the same place. Evidently, Sheol and Hades contained two compartments – Paradise for all who placed their faith in God and Hell for all who had not placed their faith in God. The great gulf was fixed between Paradise and Hell.
- 3) The moment a person died (v.22), God sent his soul to Paradise or Hell. Jesus clearly tells us in verse 31 that hearing the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets was the deciding factor.
 - a) This use of “**hearing**” does not simply mean to hear with the ear. It refers to obedience to what is heard.
 - b) Salvation is not by doing right, for all have sinned. It is by faith in God’s promises and provision. Today, we know that God provided salvation by Jesus dying in our place. Saving faith is receiving Christ’s payment for our sin.

b. The gulf now divides heaven from hell.

- 1) The Bible seems to indicate that Jesus emptied Paradise and took all the O.T. believers to heaven when He rose from the dead.
- 2) When a Christian dies, his spirit immediately enters the