



The Great Divide

Luke 16:19-31

¹⁹ "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' ²⁷ And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers— so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

A Sunday school teacher told his class the story of the rich man and Lazarus and then asked, "Now, which would you rather be, boys—the rich man or Lazarus?" One boy replied, "I'd like to be the rich man while I'm living and Lazarus when I die."

Wouldn't we all? But of course, it doesn't work that way. You can't live for selfish pleasure in this life, disobeying God's Word, and expect to live with God in heaven when you die. But the good news is, when you repent of your sins and live in obedience to Jesus Christ, you find great pleasure, both for time and eternity, no matter what your earthly circumstances. As Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (Luke 9:25). Two very different destinies lie before you, with a great chasm fixed between them. Today, choose life by choosing to follow Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions:

1. If people do not know Christ as their Savior, what great risk are they taking when any day can be their last on this earth?
2. The basis for a person's eternal destiny is fixed in the present life. How would you answer a person who said, "I think that God is cruel if He torments people for eternity in hell"?
3. A person might argue that Jesus is teaching here that we are saved by our good deeds. How would you refute this biblically?

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2 (NIV)