THE UNBRIDGEABLE GULF

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**In** the parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, found in the sixteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, it is related that the beggar was carried after death "into Abraham's bosom"; while Dives, as the rich man is sometimes styled, who had been "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," found himself in a state of torment. "And in hell he lift up his eyes, ... and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." When Dives appealed to Abraham to send Lazarus to help and comfort him, Abraham pointed out that Lazarus had had poverty to contend with all his life, while Dives had indulged in sensuous ease. Now the former was comforted, while the latter was tormented. "And beside all this," spoke Abraham in the parable, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you can not; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

Is it true that there is "a great gulf" separating mortals from regeneration, satisfaction, and healing? The word mortal is from the Latin *mors,* meaning death. The point emphasized by this parable, and reiterated many times in her writings by our Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, is that there is no point of contact between immortality and mortality, between good and evil, Spirit and matter. Mrs. Eddy writes in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" ([p. 74](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=There+is+no+bridge+across+the+gulf+which+divides+two+such+opposite+conditions+as+the+spiritual%2C+or+incorporeal%2C+and+the+physical%2C+or+corporeal.&book=tfccs.main.sh)), "There is no bridge across the gulf which divides two such opposite conditions as the spiritual, or incorporeal, and the physical, or corporeal."

Dives as a mortal could not cross the gulf that separated him from heavenly harmony. He must be willing to part with mortality, to leave all for Christ, and to awaken spiritually. He was evidently as materially-minded after as before the transition called death. Lazarus, on the other hand, had evidently awakened out of suffering sense to some degree of spiritual consciousness. The story does not imply that he had attained riches or selfish indulgence, but rather a state of comfort and peace.

Does not this parable contain a vital lesson for all mankind—namely, that, even as St. Paul declares ([I Cor. 15:50](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Flesh+and+blood+cannot+inherit+the+kingdom+of+God%3B+neither+doth+corruption+inherit+incorruption&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption"? Mankind must cease the vain attempt to bridge the gulf betwixt matter and Spirit. Matter's claim to reality is based on the false belief that Spirit, God, creates it, that He knows it, and that man must fear or honor it. This false claim is the imaginary bridge that mortal mind would erect across an impassable gulf in order to accomplish a purely fictitious invasion of the spiritual realm of infinite good.

What then is the way for one to attain the desired state of harmony? It is to know God, Love, as the All-in-all; to awaken spiritually out of the dream of mortal consciousness, and to realize that man abides in the light of Truth, where there is no darkness at all. No shadows of evil suggestion can enter the enlightened consciousness of spiritual understanding. Anything unlike infinite good is a lie, and a lie unbelieved ceases to have any power to persuade or alarm. In truth man was never on the other side of the gulf that separates the real from the unreal, because there is in reality but one side to infinity, and that is the side of God's allness, where His creation, man and the universe, is perfect and complete. An understanding of these facts produces humility, and thus delivers one from the futile effort of seeking to improve oneself or another as a mere mortal, which only results in increasing self-righteousness and self-importance, in vainly worshiping at the shrine of false selfhood.

Jesus declared to Nicodemus ([John 3:3](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Verily%2C+verily%2C+I+say+unto+thee%2C+Except+a+man+be+born+again%2C+he+cannot+see+the+kingdom+of+God.&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Mrs. Eddy states the necessity of turning absolutely from all compromise with error to the recognition of man's spiritual sonship in the following lines (Science and Health, [p. 296](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=The+old+man+with+his+deeds+must+be+put+off.+Nothing+sensual+or+sinful+is+immortal.+The+death+of+a+false+material+sense+and+of+sin%2C+not+the+death+of+organic+matter%2C+is+what+reveals+man+and+Life%2C+harmonious%2C+real%2C+and+eternal.&book=tfccs.main.sh)): "The old man with his deeds must be put off. Nothing sensual or sinful is immortal. The death of a false material sense and of sin, not the death of organic matter, is what reveals man and Life, harmonious, real, and eternal."

Devotion to mere intellectual or material advancement, or desire for the sumptuousness of "purple and fine linen," while one is ostensibly laying claim to the benefits that God alone can bestow, is an attempt to bridge the gulf between Spirit and matter, which can be accomplished only by spiritual rebirth. Mere asceticism is a similar attempt from a different direction, for by the very force of its renunciation it admits the reality of matter. John the Baptist was an ascetic, devoutly sincere in his religious beliefs, and he was the fore-runner of the Messiah; yet Jesus spoke of him in these words ([Matt. 11:11](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Among+them+that+are+born+of+women+there+hath+not+risen+a+greater+than+John+the+Baptist%3A+notwithstanding+he+that+is+least+in+the+kingdom+of+heaven+is+greater+than+he.&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)): "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The way out of material consciousness and suffering sense has been blazoned for all mankind and for all time by Christ Jesus' works and teachings, as explained in this age by Christian Science. To help seekers along each step of the way, our Leader has provided for such varied helps as the Lesson-Sermons, consisting of correlative citations from the Bible and Science and Health for daily study; church services, lectures, Reading Rooms, and Sunday Schools, and daily, weekly, and monthly publications. Far more precious, however, than all these, and the basis of the inspiration by which they were founded, are Science and Health and our Leader's other writings, which so illumine the Scriptures. Certainly today even he who runs may read and learn the way of Life.

Man is not a mortal striving to reach perfection across a bridgeless gulf of mortality, but he is the perfect son of God, the likeness of the Most High. There is in reality no gulf separating one from good. We can and must turn away from mortality, awaken from all sinful, diseased, finite, and personal concepts to the only real consciousness, the power and glory of spiritual understanding, self-complete and all-inclusive. Thus is realized man's birthright of intelligence, ability, happiness, health, and true prosperity.