

1. And yet he explicitly denies that salvation, and eternal life, is ONLY for those who surrender their lives to Christ
 - a. In Rohr's opinion, that kind of teaching only leads to a mean and vengeful God – a God who most average human beings can surpass in their ability to show love
 - i. This is a TRAGICALLY unbiblical view, and yet is increasingly becoming more and more mainstream
2. Hitting closer to home, some of you might be familiar with the name of the late reverend, Carlton Pearson
 - a. For many years, Pearson was the Pastor of Higher Dimensions in Tulsa, which at its peak had an average attendance of over 6,000 people
 - i. But in the early 2000's, Pearson began to depart from the Bible's teachings on salvation through Christ and Christ alone
 1. And he was eventually cast out as a heretic by the church in general
 - ii. Here are Pearson's words, when asked, "Who do YOU believe is a heretic, and who do YOU believe is holy?"
 1. Pearson replied, "My gay friends - and I have several - over the years, I got tired of sending them to hell. It messed with my theology and my heart. And so I started preaching the gospel of inclusion, saying that Hindus, Muslims, Jews, everybody has access to the grace of the God we preach..."
 - iii. Pearson would go on for the next twenty years, growing more and more entrenched in his beliefs in Universal Salvation, and he would eventually be welcomed back to the Tulsa area as one of the ministers of All Souls Unitarian Church
 1. We would like to think that his later influence was restricted to the fringe sect of the Unitarian church, but unfortunately that is not the case
 - a. When Pearson died last November, Transformation Church, the fastest growing church in our area, hosted his memorial service
 - b. After the service, Mike Todd, the pastor of Transformation, posted a picture on Instagram of a shirt that Pearson had given to him to wear at the service, and Todd posted along with it,
 - i. "This shirt may just seem like ordinary material, but as I stood leading the Bishop's celebration of life, with people young and old from all over the world honoring his enormous contribution to their faith...it felt more like a mantle."
 - ii. Friends, that is a frightening statement coming from a pastor who boasts that their church sees upwards of 80 THOUSAND salvations every year
 2. While Mike Todd and Transformation haven't gone completely down the road of his mentor, Bishop Pearson, it is clear that those seeds are definitely growing

3. And of course, if you have been paying attention to the Roman Catholic church lately, you'll know that just a few weeks ago, at a youth interfaith dialogue of all places, Pope Francis had these words to say,
 - a. "Every religion is a way to arrive at God... They are like different languages to arrive at God, but God is God for all. And as God is god for all, we are all children of God... There is only one God in each of us, though many languages to arrive at God. Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, they are just different paths."
 - i. This belief in universal salvation is being pushed by the head of the Catholic church
 - ii. The heresies of universal salvation are slowly and quietly being embraced by one of the largest and most influential churches in our area
 - iii. And the unbiblical teaching that Christ's death secured the salvation of all, because a loving God could do no less, is being spread far and wide through people like Richard Rohr and Oprah Winfrey
4. John Owen wrote his book, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, specifically to combat these heretical views
 - a. And I would say that this book is now needed more than ever in the church
 - i. So what in the world does all of this have to do with a small village called Nain, and the death of a widow's son?
 1. Well, let's look at our passage and we will find out!

2. Luke 7, starting in verse 11...

a. ¹¹Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him.

- i. So last week we saw how Jesus was in the city of Capernaum, and it was there that he healed the servant of the Roman Centurion
 1. We don't know the exact time frame of how all these things unfolded
 - a. But it is very likely that the great crowd that was following Jesus into Nain was the same great crowd that had listened to him deliver the Sermon on the Plain
 - i. Luke leaves room in his narrative for the possibility that all of this happened just over the course of a day or two...
 1. A great mass of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon come to Jesus to be healed of their diseases
 2. Jesus miraculously heals them all
 3. Then he delivers the sermon on the plain
 4. Then he goes into Capernaum and heals the Centurion's servant, possibly even on his way to Nain
 5. And then, here in verse 11, Jesus, his disciples, and a great crowd all enter this small village
 - a. This is the only time the town of Nain is mentioned in the Scriptures
 - i. There's no historical or biblical significance to this town... other than the fact that this is where Jesus would first perform the incredible miracle of raising a dead person back to life!
- ii. So Jesus and the crowds enter Nain, and there they are met with another great crowd
 1. But while the great crowd that was with Jesus was filled with excitement and anticipation,

a. The great crowd in Nain was filled with mourning and sorrow

3. Luke 7:12-13

a. ¹²As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.
¹³And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."

i. It's important for us to pause here and note a couple of things...

1. First, notice that when the Lord saw this widow who had just lost her only son, Luke writes that Jesus had compassion on her

a. As we'll see here in a few minutes, there was certainly a MUCH greater meaning to the sign that Jesus was about to perform than could be seen in the small town of Nain

i. But even still, at the heart of Jesus' actions, was his COMPASSION

1. This poor woman had lost her husband, the one who protected her and provided for her and cared for her

a. But at least she had had a son who would continue to love her and take care of her

2. But now she had nothing

a. The only two men in her life that had her heart, were now both gone

3. More than anyone else in that gathering of the two great crowds, Jesus would have known the depth of the grief in the widow's heart

a. And so, he had compassion on her

i. May we never forget that, while Jesus is the High King of Heaven, the King of kings and Lord of lords, he is also our kind and compassionate elder brother

ii. And he cares deeply about the sorrows of our hearts

2. The second thing that we need to note from verse 13 is more of a word of caution for us as Christ's followers

a. Jesus looks at the woman, and he sees her in her time of great need and sadness, and yet he says to her, "Do not weep."

i. Now, it would be really easy for us to take these three words from Jesus, and immediately develop a theology of mourning, right?

1. I mean, that's what we tend to do, isn't it?

a. Jesus encounters a woman at a funeral, and he tells her not to weep, so that's the way WE should be

b. Especially for our loved ones who we know have gone on to be with the Lord – there's no reason for us to weep for them because we know where they are

2. Well, I don't necessarily think this is a widespread issue in the church, but it still needs to be reiterated

a. Jesus CARES deeply for our sorrows

b. He doesn't want us insincerely pushing down all of our emotions, just so we can seem more spiritual and heavenly minded on the outside

i. Even Jesus himself wept when he was faced with the death of his own friend, Lazarus

3. The Scriptures are clear, mourning is a reality of life
 - a. In fact, we learned a few weeks ago that Jesus taught that those who mourn are BLESSED, for there will come a time when their mourning will turn to laughing
4. Friends, we NOT called to NEVER grieve
 - a. But instead, we are called to grieve as a people who, even though we face loss in this world, our HOPE lies in the world that is yet to come
- b. But in this instance, Jesus knew what was about to happen
 - i. So his words to the widow were most assuredly not words of rebuke, but words of comfort
 1. "Do not weep... but watch and see!"
4. Luke 7:14-15
 - a. *¹⁴Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.*
 - i. Can you imagine what the scene would have been like?
 1. Who knows how many people the two "great crowds" represented, but surely it was up in the hundreds
 - a. And here they all see Jesus go up to the funeral bier, and they hear him say to the man, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"
 - i. And then he did!!
 - b. You can just picture the amazement rippling through the crowds...
 - i. "Did you see that?!"
 - ii. "He just raised that boy back from the dead!!"
 - c. Well, it wasn't just amazement that went all throughout the crowds...
5. In Luke 7:16-17, we read,
 - a. *¹⁶Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" ¹⁷And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.*
 - i. FEAR seized them all
 1. Who IS this man?
 - a. We've seen him heal the sick...
 - b. We've seen him drive out the demons...
 - c. We've heard him teach with great authority concerning the Word of God
 - i. But NOW, he is raising the dead to life?!
 1. If anyone in the crowds had doubted before, surely at this point they began to realize that this was no ordinary rabbi standing before them
 - a. And so, in their fear, they begin to glorify God, and a rumbling begins to be heard...
 - i. "A great prophet has arisen among us!"
 - ii. "God has visited his people!"
 2. It is not without warrant that the people would come to such a conclusion
 - a. Even though the people of Israel in these days weren't always following the Word of God, they certainly KNEW the word of God
 - i. And so, as they saw these events unfold, in their minds they must have thought back to all of the familiar stories about the great prophets of old
 1. Specifically, they would have remembered the story of Elijah and the widow at Zarephath

- b. Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Kings 17:17-24...
 - i. We've looked at this passage before, back when Jesus preached at his home synagogue in Nazareth
 - 1. If you remember, Jesus said some things in that sermon that made his old neighbors so mad that they tried to throw him off a cliff
 - a. One of the things he pointed them to was the story of Elijah, the great prophet of Israel, bypassing ALL the people of Israel during a famine, and instead providing help and comfort to this widow in Zarephath, a Gentile
 - i. Needless to say, that message was not received well by the people
 - 1. But here, starting in verse 17, we find the second part of Elijah's interaction with the widow
 - ii. *17After this the son of the woman [the widow], the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. 18And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" 19And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. 20And he cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?" 21Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." 22And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." 24And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."*
- c. Just think about the similarities between this passage and our passage in Luke
 - i. In 1 Kings 17, it says that Elijah sojourned with the widow
 - 1. This word for sojourned is used of a new-comer, or a guest, or a visitor
 - a. And in Luke 7, when the people see Jesus raise the young man from the dead, they proclaimed that God had "visited His people"
 - ii. In 1 Kings 17, the widow called Elijah "O man of God"
 - 1. Throughout the Old Testament, this is the title given to God's prophets the people called Jesus the "prophet" from God
 - a. There is the unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 13 who comes to prophesy against King Jeroboam... he's simply known as "the man of God"
 - b. In 1 Kings 20, another unnamed prophet comes to the king of Israel to foretell the destruction of the Syrian army, and again, he's simply called "the man of God"
 - c. And here we have the widow of Zarephath saying to Elijah in her distress, "What have you against me, O man of God?"
 - i. In the Old Testament, the man of God was the prophet of God
 - 1. So as the people began to draw the parallels between Jesus and Eiljah, they realized that a NEW man of God was standing before them
 - 2. They realized that a great prophet had arisen among them!
 - iii. And in 1 Kings 17, Elijah raises the widow's son to life, and then it says he brought him down from the upper chamber and delivered him to his mother
 - 1. And in Luke 7, Jesus raises the widow's son to life, he is brought down from the bier, and Luke says that Jesus "gave him to his mother"
 - a. The similarities in these two passages are striking

- i. Paul argues that if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then what in the world are we doing here?!
 - 1. If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is in vain!
 - 2. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile
 - 3. If Christ has not been raised, then Paul says that we are of all people “most to be pitied”
 - a. Do you realize the weight of all of this, Christians?
 - i. Our faith – our Sunday gatherings, our early morning quiet times, our giving toward missions, our praying for our neighbors, our lives of self-denial and self-sacrificial love – ALL of it is just a waste of time...
 - 1. UNLESS what the Bible says about Jesus is TRUE
 - 2. UNLESS Jesus truly has conquered death
 - a. If Jesus has not conquered death, then our entire faith is just a bunch of foolishness
- 4. But here’s the deal... IF, on the other hand, Christ has TRULY conquered death
 - a. THEN that means that ALL who come to him, EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE in this world, will live for ETERNITY in the world to come
 - i. Healed
 - ii. Whole
 - iii. Forgiven
 - iv. Sinless
 - v. No longer even having the ability sin
 - b. If Christ has been raised from the dead, then that means that we too, Christians, will be raised as well
 - i. Just take a moment and let the implications of that BIBLICAL truth set in
 - 1. Yes, you may leave here this afternoon and be involved in a tragic car accident on your way home where you lose your life
 - a. But IF YOU ARE IN CHRIST, then you are simply closing your eyes for a moment, and then you will be alive again with the Lord!
 - 2. You may walk out of here whole and healthy today, but maybe next week, or next month, or a year from now, you might get the diagnosis that you have terminal cancer
 - a. And after just a short time, your life is unexpectedly over
 - i. But IF YOU ARE IN CHRIST, then you are simply closing your eyes for a moment, and then you will be alive again with the Lord!
 - 3. Or what if you get some crazy idea in your head that God has called you and your family to go into the mission field to some unreached people group on the other side of the globe
 - a. Maybe you sell everything, head overseas with just a backpack to your name, and within days a radical Muslim group captures you and takes your life
 - i. Friends, IF YOU ARE IN CHRIST, then you are simply closing your eyes for a moment, and then you will be alive again with the Lord!

5. Do you see how our lives could RADICALLY change during our time here on earth, IF we truly believed that our Lord has CONQUORED death?!
 - a. What is bad doctors report compared to the promise of eternal life?
 - b. What is the loss of a job compared to the promise of eternal life?
 - c. What is a bad day at work, or night where you don't sleep too well, or any kind of hardship or trial, compared to the promise of eternal life?
 - d. What is persecution, or slander, or being laughed at or ostracized for our faith in Jesus... what is all of that, compared to the promise of eternal life?
6. Brothers and sisters in Christ, the fact that Christ has conquered death is meant to be incredibly freeing for all who are in him
 - a. As Paul closes his argument in 1 Corinthians 15...
 - i. After he's laid out the evidence for the resurrection of Christ,
 - ii. After he's put forward the fact that Christ will utterly destroy death in the end,
 - iii. After he's walked through just a glimpse of what OUR resurrected bodies will look like,
 1. After all of that, Paul says in verse 58, *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."*
 - a. Work hard, Christian
 - b. Finish your race strong
 - c. In football terminology, leave it all on the field
 2. For, in Christ, death has truly died
 - a. And all those who are in him will not be affected by the SECOND death
 - c. Which brings us back to John Owen, and the growing influence of Universalism in the church today
 - i. Friends, all of the glorious things we have talked about this morning are glorious indeed
 1. But the reality that the Scriptures give us is that these realities are not for all
 - a. As the Scriptures near the end, in Revelation 21:6-7 the Lord God gives us this promise:
 - i. *⁶"It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son."*
 - b. But He also gives us this warning in the following verses:
 - i. *⁸But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*
 - c. Contrary to what Richard Rohr, or Carlton Pearson, or even Pope Francis says, all roads do not lead to God
 - i. There is one road, and that road is through Christ and Christ alone
 2. May we be faithful in proclaiming these truths, as difficult and unpopular as they may be
 - a. Christ alone is the Destroyer of Death
 - i. And all who are IN HIM will reign WITH him, for all eternity!