

# Chopping Wood for Father

by Carter Conlon

---

*The speaker shares a personal story about his relationship with his father and explains the importance of affection, words, and overcoming fear in our relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 56:24

**Scripture:** Romans 8:35, Romans 8:37-39

**Topics:** "Grace"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the passion and compassion of God rather than a hard religion that people cannot live up to. He shares that preaching in the strength of God, rather than one's own strength, leads to greater effectiveness and fulfillment. The preacher warns against the danger of losing the testimony and heart of God within the church, which can happen when the focus becomes on working for God's approval rather than embracing the redemption provided by Jesus. He encourages the listeners to overcome the mindset of trying to please God through their own efforts and instead embrace the truth that God is already pleased with them.

---

## Transcript

This recording is provided by Times Square Church in New York City. You're welcome to make additional copies for free distribution to friends. All other unauthorized duplication or electronic transmission is a violation of copyright and other applicable laws.

This recording cannot be posted on any website. However, written permission to link to the Times Square Church homepage may be requested by emailing info at [timessquarechurch.org](mailto:info@timessquarechurch.org). Other recordings are available by calling 1-800-488-0854 or by writing to Times Square Church Tape Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, New York, 10019. If you'll turn with me please in the end of your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter 2. I'm going to share with you tonight excerpts, not in entirety I don't think, but parts of a message that I spoke last week in Texas to a conference of pastors.

And I have to say that I believe that when this was shared it brought a great freedom to many of these wonderful men and women of God. And I trust tonight that the Lord will minister of this. Now a lot of what I'm going to say for those who have attended this church any amount of time is not new to you.

You know a lot of my own testimony. And so bear with me please if it's repetition for you for the sake of those who haven't heard this before. Father, tonight I come to you.

Lord, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, you always come. You always bless your people.

Lord, you said if a son or daughter is hungry for bread, you'll not give them a stone. And tonight people have come and they're wanting the bread of God, the living word of almighty God. Father, tonight I pray you quicken my mind and body and enable me to open this word that it might be brought to the people in a manner that it will meet the deepest needs of many, many hearts.

Jesus, tonight be glorified. Quicken me now. I thank you for this quickening.

I stand in the grace that you provide, that I preach about, that I teach about. I talked about it tonight. I stand in the same grace in this pulpit now and I ask that you be glorified through me.

In Jesus' name. I'm going to share a message tonight called Chopping Wood for Father. And in this message I'm going to share a little bit about my relationship with my own father.

And, you know, sometimes when we get to sharing personal things, there can be a bit of a dilemma. Seeing that there's a commandment that says, Honor your father and your mother, which is the first commandment with a promise that it might be well with you and that you may live long upon the earth. Now, I've seen people in the past get up and share testimonies and bring complete dishonor to their mother and father.

And I often wonder how do you justify breaking a commandment of God and at the same time giving God glory? Let me say before I share some of the things I'm about to tonight. My father was a good man. He was not a saved man till the end of his life, but he was a decent man.

I never recall him ever telling a lie. I never saw him turn and look at another woman other than my mother. He was steadfast.

He worked hard. He came home at the end of every day. You could literally set your watch by my father's stability.

Now, he died a saved man. I led him to the Lord in the last conscious hour of his life. And we had a wonderful hour together.

I think the most wonderful hour, perhaps, of my entire relationship with him. He went home to be with God. And so tonight he's in heaven.

And I know that the things that I'm about to share with you, he would not mind me sharing these things because it's for the purpose of delivering you from some of the things that I had to go through as a Christian. Ephesians, that's Revelation chapter 2, a message to the church of Ephesus. Now, these are the words of Jesus.

He's come to his own church. And keep in mind this is first generation Christianity. Something is happening to these people.

And he writes, he said, To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, and has tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and has found them liars, and has borne and has patience, and for my

name's sake has labored and not fainted. Nevertheless, I have someone against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first works, or else I will come to thee quickly and remove thy candlestick, which is your testimony, out of its place. Remember now, it's Jesus who lit the candle of his church. And as the parable says of the woman who lost a coin, and she lit a candle and swept the house as it is, after this candle provided the light, that's a type of what Christ is speaking about, his own mission on this earth.

He came to obey his father, to provide redemption, so that the Holy Spirit might come and light a candle, as it is, of God's life and light within you and I. And through his church he's sweeping the world until the day he comes and takes us home. And so this church is in danger of losing this testimony. They're also in danger of losing the passion and compassion of God.

There's a lot more to the candlestick than just being able to speak the name Jesus. There's something of God's heart that he plants within his church. And this church was losing this heart.

They were working. They were testing. They were trying.

They were proving. They were laboring. They were bearing.

They were calling falseness, falseness. And he says, you've done it in my name. For my name's sake you've labored.

Now they're not doing it for the church's sake. They haven't got the name of the Ephesian church in lights. It's Jesus they're doing it for.

And it's the name of Jesus that is at the forefront of all that they're doing. And they're carrying on and they're not fainting. But they're losing something of God that is going to cause them to not be as it is an illustration of this passion of God that he has for a lost and dying world.

This passion of God that caused him to come, take on the form of a man when he could have just as easily and legally just taken the whole thing called planet Earth and just flicked it into utter darkness forever. And he could have created something else and someone else. He could have recreated man, really.

But there's a passion in God's heart for his own creation. And he's saying to the church of Ephesus, you'll stand as it is, but you're going to lose this. You're going to lose the very heart of God in what it is that you're doing.

And then he goes on to verse 7 now. He says, he that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcomes.

Now, you're talking about overcoming this loss of something, of his life that they were in danger of losing. Will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God? Now, that's not future tense. Now, he's speaking to the church of Ephesus.

And he's telling them, you've left your first love. You're doing all this work. Now, if you'll overcome this, this tendency to move to works and lose this testimony, I will give you something.

And it's not in the future. It's now. I'll give you to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

We'll be speaking about that a little bit later on. Now, I told you the kind of a man that my father was. But there was another thing that went on in our relationship.

My father displayed very little affection for me, if any at all. I don't ever recall. As a matter of fact, he never did.

He never said to me, I love you. I don't ever recall his hand over my, around my shoulder, hugging me saying you're a good boy or a fine young man. He was a steady Eddie as it is as far as work ethic and such like.

But there was no affection. And I don't know why it is. There seemed to be a lot of men of that generation.

Perhaps it was the after effect of going through a war. I'm not quite sure what the roots of it were. But I know that there are very many that came through the same school that I came through.

My father, though, would once in a while compliment me if I would do certain things. And we had a cottage in those days. And in the cottage, we had a wood burning stove and a fireplace.

And so we'd be there early spring, late fall when the weather was cold in Canada. And so we needed wood. And I discovered something.

If I would cut wood, then my father would come to the cottage and he'd say, hey, who cut all that wood? I'd say, well, I didn't. He'd say, well, that that is really good. I didn't say your I love you.

He didn't say you're a fine son. He just said that's really good. That was as close as I would get to any kind of a feedback from my father.

So I spent a lot of time cutting wood. I cut a lot of wood when I was growing up. I'd be in the bush and I'd be swatting the bugs because there's a lot of them in Canada.

And I had a chainsaw in my hands. And when I got older, I'd be cutting wood and cutting wood and cutting wood. Because my father was going to come out and say, that is good.

What you did was good. And I would paint a fence once in a while at home, cut the grass. And I shoveled our driveway like I was carving a fine Eskimo carving every little because he would say, oh, you did it.

That was very nice. The driveway was well shoveled. And I did all of these things for years in order to gain my father's approval.

But you see, when I got to be 15, I got tired of working for his approval. And there were goals that was there were set before me that I felt that I was unable to achieve. My grandfather was a judge and my father had great goals put before him.

But World War Two came along and took it all away from most of that generation. When he came back from the war, there was no possible thought of ever going to university or college. And so he took what job he could get.

He worked in a mine. He worked there all of his life. And he began to live much of his lost dream through my life.

So I was his first born son and I had goals put before me as his father had put before him. But as I progressed in school, I really didn't like school. Matter of fact, I hated school.

And I would just sit there and stare at the clock waiting for the day to be over. And I never understand trigonometry, for example. I remember saying to the teacher, I put up my hand.

I said, what is the point of all of this? Where are you ever going to use this in life? Tell me who goes around talking about sine and cosine and tan and cotan and all of this stuff. I said, what's the point of all of this? And I was serious. They were very offended at my question, but I was nevertheless I was serious about this.

And I didn't see that I would have within me the ability to achieve the goals that were being set before me. And because of it, a very deep seated fear started to get a hold of my life. Now, many of you know my story.

At the age of 15, I started suffering panic attacks. And these panic attacks are the closest thing to hell on earth that I've ever experienced in my life. Your heart starts to pound.

You start to sweat. You start to feel like you're going to die. There's a sense of lostness and foreboding that comes into your mind.

And just a blackness, a darkness begins to envelop you and you think it's all over. I suffered for nine years from these panic attacks. And twice, at least, they put me in the hospital.

They had to take me by ambulance. One time when I was in my first year, I think it was of university. They took me into the emergency room.

The nurse put a blood pressure gauge on my arm. And then when she took my blood pressure, she dropped it on the floor and ran out of the room. She felt I was going to have a massive heart attack or a stroke right on that.

My blood pressure was so high, she didn't know if my body would be able to handle this. And I remember at 15 when these things started, because you have goals put before you and you really don't think you can achieve these goals. And I started arguing.

I started making life really hard. We'd be fighting all the time in the house. I was yelling and arguing at my mother, not so much at my father.

He was pretty strong and he had a big hand, so you had to pick your words and spots very, very carefully with him. And I remember once. I don't recommend this.

Please don't take this as a suggestion for your children. But I remember once I raised my voice at my mother in the house and he hit me so hard in the back of the head with an open hand that it took me a long time to recover from the dizziness. But I remember getting in the car one day and my father rarely raised his voice.

And we were yelling at each other in the car and he said, what is wrong with you? Why are you doing this? Why are you making our lives such a wreck in the house? Why are you doing this with your mother? Why are you arguing with everything that's put before you? What's wrong with you? I didn't know how to tell him. I don't know if I even understood it myself at that time. But if he would have just said in retrospect, if he would have just turned and said, son, I love you.

I receive you as you are. I accept you for who you are. I will always be there for you.

I will always love you. I do believe that it could have changed the course of my teenage years. Fathers that are here today, you don't understand the power of your words to your sons and daughters.

Don't withhold your affection. Be very affectionate with your children. Genuinely affectionate.

They need that word of encouragement. They need to know because there's a fear that can get a hold of young people. And you wonder why your sons and daughters are rebelling and so angry.

It's because they fear your displeasure. They fear that they're going to fail. We're setting goals before them that they're afraid they can't achieve.

And I'll tell you, it's so changed for me. When I became a father, I hugged my children all the time. Even when my son Jason graduated from Parris Island in the Marine Corps.

I remember he was standing perfectly still in detention after they graduated. And he saw me walking up to him. And they're not allowed to speak or do anything.

And he said, don't hug me. Don't hug me. Don't hug me.

I hugged him anyway. I hugged him. I hugged my sons and my daughter today.

My oldest boy is 28 years old. My second son is 25. My daughter is 22.

And I hugged them at every possible opportunity. And I'm not doing it out of some kind of a moral obligation. I'm doing it because I love them.

I'm doing it because the love of God has transformed my heart. I remember my son Jared played hockey in college. I remember dropping him off to the bus one time with his team.

And we always hug and kiss each other. I kiss his cheek. He kisses mine.

I remember dropping his hockey stuff off and he's heading off to some town somewhere to play. And I grabbed him and I hugged him. I kissed his cheek.

He kissed mine. He got on the bus and the guys on the team said, man, you kiss your dad. And he said, yeah, yeah, we do all the time.

And they said, that's awesome. That's awesome that you kiss your dad and your dad kisses you. I went on to university and university was very tough.

I went there because of my father. He never had a chance. And I started studying.

I did get an undergraduate degree in law and sociology. And I remember being in class and I would have to take volume in order to go into class. And I lived in this bubble.

I was so afraid that I'd be singled out, even if it was a class of only 12 or 15. If they singled me out, I would panic. And I'd either have to run out of the class or I'd hit the floor, one of the two.

And I lived with this dread in my life all the time. And it was a terrible experience for me until the age of 24. And at 24 years of age, Jesus found me.

I didn't find him. He was never lost. He found me and opened my heart and saved me and introduced me to my heavenly father.

And I began to read in the Bible, God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son. I read in Isaiah, I have loved you with an everlasting love. I read the apostle Paul when he said, who can separate us from the love of God? It was Paul who said the words of God before us, who can be against us? And those of you who know my story, I'm not going to go into great detail.

But when I came to Christ at 24 years of age, one night in my home, I felt one of these panic attacks coming on me again. Now, typically before Christ, I would fill my face with pills and with whiskey. But this night, there was no more pills.

There was no more whiskey after Christ. And I went downstairs and I had a confrontation with the enemy. I said, Satan, now all you can do is kill me, but I don't fear death anymore.

If you do, I'm going home to be with God forever. And you can only kill me if God allows you to kill me. So I said, I challenge you.

I said all of this out loud about 12, 1230 in the morning. I said, you throw at me everything you've got, but I throw at you what I have now. And I only had one scripture of God before us who can be against us.

And I said, in the name of Jesus Christ, the son of God, I resist you. I remember that's all I knew. I resist you.

Folks, you don't have to know the whole Bible to defeat the devil. David, David, the king, only had one stone. You don't have to know the whole Bible.

You have to have one promise and you have to believe it. That's really the key. And I had one promise and I believed it and threw it in the forehead of the one who thought he could dominate and control the rest of my life.

I said, no, I'm not standing for this anymore. Now, you have to have faith, but I want to challenge you tonight. Those of you who are getting beat up by the enemy, there's a time you've got to get a little bit of gravel in your gut.

You've got to stand up. You cannot just lay there and like a dish rag and say, well, you know, devil, you just crawl all over me all you want. Jesus is going to come one day in the by and by and deliver me.

You've got to get up and fight back. You've got to take the word of God. I said, I resist you.

And I felt at that moment a heat. It started at the back of my head and went right down through my body to my feet. I was completely delivered that night from all fear, completely set free from fear from that day till this day.

There's never been a recurrence of it. I thank God with all of my heart. The deliverance is complete.

It's whole. It's entire. It's not partial.

You shall know the truth and you shall. The truth shall make you free. Jesus said, thanks be to God.

When I was 25, a year after my conversion, one night I was laying in bed and I was weeping. And Teresa asked me, she said, why are you crying? I was weeping to the point where tears are coming down my face. I said, because I'm reading about the love of God in the Bible and I don't understand it.

I don't feel it. I mean, I know it with my mind. And I became an avid student of the word of God, but I don't feel anything in my heart.

I just I theoretically know that God loves me. And it's really nice. But I don't feel it.

I don't feel anything in my heart about this love. And I want to know. And so I began to cry out and I said, God, you've got to you've got to show me this.

You've got to help me in this because I I don't have a frame of reference. I don't know what it means to feel this kind of love inside. And not knowing how to respond to the love of God, I did the thing that I knew to do.

And I began to chop wood for my heavenly father. That's exactly what I did. And that's what some of you are doing tonight.

I chopped wood for 13 years and I didn't just chop cords of wood. I traveled the whole country. I was going to bring this whole country to my heavenly father in three years or less.

I went north. I went south. I went east.

I went west. I went to Eskimos in the Arctic. The Indians on reserves.

I went I went all over. I went to South America and preached there. And I was I wasn't cutting trees anymore.

I was cutting forest down for my heavenly father. For 13 years, I did this to gain the favor of my heavenly father. And so one day I was in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

And I was preaching what was at least called revival in a church at that time when I began to feel very, very strange. I couldn't sleep at night. And this this funny feeling that I knew wasn't the Holy Ghost was on me.

And I I couldn't understand it. I finished out the series of meetings in Saskatchewan. Then I got back on the plane and went home.

And and I remember going out on the ice. We were playing a hockey game and I could usually skate with the best of them when I was in my 30s, even the younger guys. And I remember coming back and sitting

on the bench.

I couldn't breathe. I put my head down. What is wrong with me? I cannot catch my breath.

I can't breathe. I have no energy and I had terrible headaches. And this began six months of an awful time.

What I was suffering was a physical breakdown. And I never believed it could happen because I had inexhaustible energy. I was working as a full time policeman, driving 36 miles into the city, 36 miles home.

I bought a hobby farm that got way out of hand. I had 68 sheep, two cows, three horses, 47 chickens, five goats, a blind German shepherd dog that wandered into the yard and 17 people living in our house that we took in one winter. I'm telling you, I was running on four hours sleep a night.

I was fasting until my ribs stuck out. If you witnessed it, five people I've witnessed to seven. If you fasted five days, I'd fast seven days.

Nobody was going to work harder for my heavenly father than I was working for him. Now my strength was leaving. And all I could do is one Sunday every week I'd get in the pulpit and as I'm speaking tonight was about as loud as I could speak.

Because if I spoke any louder, the headaches were so violent. Even just doing what I'm doing tonight, I would have to go home and take a whole pile of Tylenol and lay down for the rest of the day because of the intensity of the headaches that I was suffering. And I went through this for months.

And finally, one day I'd had enough and I went out on the road. We lived in the country and I walked up and down the road and an anger got a hold of my heart and I ended up screaming at God and I accused him. And I don't mean to be irreverent, but I'm going to tell you exactly what I said.

I said, God, is there some kind of a crooked twist in your character that I'm not aware of, that I've given you everything I have? I've given you my life. I've given you my family. We at our house had burned down along this journey.

I've given you my possessions. I've given you my future. I gave you my career.

I've given you everything I have. I've gone and I've traveled thousands of miles for you and you reward me by taking away my health. Is this how you treat your children? And that was my car.

I was just so angry and I screamed it out at God and I didn't hear anything from the Lord until I got it all out. And it was all out of me and I just stood there and I was so angry. And finally, when it was all over, I heard his voice and he said, I love you.

I was I knew it was the voice of God because I didn't expect to hear it. I expected to hear a father scream back at me. I expected him to be very displeased with how I was accusing him and such like.

And he said to me, I love you. And he said it with such compassion and melted my heart. And I stood there and I began to weep and he began to unfold over time some things to me.

And he showed me that is the prodigal son that has been his delight. When I got up in my mess to come to him, that he covered me and he took away my sin and he covered me with his own blood. And as the Bible says, his own righteousness or that means the cleanness of God.

He covered me. He said it was my delight, no matter how much of a mess you were to embrace you and kiss you and cover you. And it just dawned on me that as the prodigal son is heading home, the father is not speaking to him at this point.

He's not saying anything. He just covers him. He said he delighted me to put a ring on your finger and give you a spiritual authority.

And I knew I had spiritual authority. I had overcome the evil one on the first year of my conversion. I knew I'd been preaching throughout parts of Canada and other parts of the world.

I had seen the spiritual authority and God said I delighted me to give you authority. It delighted me to put shoes on your feet because I had ordained a new path for you. And you were going to stand and be a witness for me of my goodness the rest of your life.

And then I called you into my house. And as it is, I struck up the band. And the Bible tells us clearly there's joy in heaven over one sinner that repents.

And in the story of the prodigal son, remember it says in the house there was music and dancing. And this is the father. He brought in the son and says basically strike up the band.

There's going to be singing and dancing tonight. And if you've ever been to a Jewish celebration, and I have been in Jerusalem, it is an event to behold. The true Jewish celebration is incredible.

It's such a foreshadow actually of what's going to transpire in the day that Christ returns. And he said there was a party as it is in your honor that was taking place. And if you would have stayed long enough, you would have watched me dance.

And you would have seen me rejoice over you. Because it says in the scriptures, I will joy over you with singing. I will joy over you.

I'll bring you back to me. I'll restore everything the moth and canker worm have eaten. And I will joy over you with singing.

But he said, son, you left the party too soon. You headed out the door before you had a chance to experience my joy. And just like your elder brother, you got involved in fruitless religion.

Religion, of course, that is self-motivated. Religion that has human effort behind it. Religion that ultimately loses its joy.

You see, the elder brother in the story of the prodigal became like the church of Ephesus was in danger of becoming. The elder brother lost his candlestick. He lost the heart of his father.

That's the candlestick. He lost the heart of God. He was out doing these works and doing these religious things, but knew so little of his father's heart.

And he said to me, son, you didn't stay long enough to let me rejoice over you. You took your shoes and your ring and your robe and you headed out to cut wood for me. You headed out to do things for me.

You headed out to please me. And so I had to take away your strength before you lost your candlestick. You were in danger of losing my heart for fallen humanity.

Oh, folks, if God hadn't touched me, I wouldn't be here today. I wouldn't be in this church. I wouldn't know what I know.

I wouldn't be able to speak the way he's given me to speak if he'd not taken my strength away. Thank God that he only takes away things that we don't need to give us things that we do need. He said the candlestick.

You see, I had to take it away before you lost your candlestick. And that candlestick is the knowledge that I love you. I loved you before you knew me.

You have always been and always will be the delight of my heart. God's Word says clearly, I loved you before you even knew me. It's amazing.

You didn't love me. I loved you. He said to the church of Ephesus, you've got to get back to your first love.

The first love is not your love for me. My love for you was the first love. I loved you first before you even knew me.

And you didn't stay long enough to find that out. You didn't stay long enough to find out. It was my delight to restore you.

It's my delight to cleanse you. It's my delight to empower you. It's my delight to send you to the four corners of the earth.

But the message you must bring is not self-willed religion. The message you bring is the passion in the heart of your Father for every man, woman and child ever born in the image of God. You left the party too soon, son.

You left the party. You walked out before you fully knew how much I loved you. It's true.

I got saved and I was in the witnessing class. I don't know how soon. It seemed almost immediately after.

I'm in the do for God class. He says, you just didn't let me love you long enough. And because of it, you headed out and you lost my heart.

And it's true. It's true. I did because I was hammering the church all over the country.

I was masterful at filling altars with weeping people. But I remember coming home to Teresa one time and I said, I don't know. The salvation I preach is deficient.

I said, I'm going back after two years of preaching in these churches. And it's the same people coming to the same altar and are weeping the same tears. They don't seem to have moved forward.

Well, you see, religion is without relationship and works without understanding why we do what we do. And anything that doesn't have the very heart of God's passion for the lost at the very center of it, first of all, loses perspective of itself. And secondly, can't preach a Christ that doesn't understand to other people.

My response on the road that day was, what would you have me to do? But it was different now. Before it was to earn favor. And now I understood that I had his favor.

I never had to earn it in the first place. I was fully received in Christ at the right hand of God. You can't get any more fully received than fully received.

You can't be any more righteous than the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. That you delighted to restore me, forgive me, cleanse me, receive me into fellowship, guarantee me a place in eternity. It was the delight of your heart.

That's why you came. That's why you became a man. It's the delight of your heart to rejoice over me.

And all you wanted me to do is go out and tell other people about this. Tell them about this incredible passion that's in the heart of God for those that are lost in their sin. What would you have me to do? Because it changed now.

I wanted to go out because I understood something. It came in just a moment of time. Oh God, what would you have me to do? And he said to me, only what I ask you.

And it won't be heavy. And the burden will be light. And you won't burn out anymore for the rest of your life.

You won't lose your strength. He says, I'll give you back your strength. But it won't be yours.

It will be mine. I said to the Lord, but I thought I was supposed to take up my cross and follow you every day. He said, but yes, Carter.

Don't you remember? I couldn't carry my cross either. And my father had to send a man to help me make it all the way. And he said, I sent someone to help you because you can't carry your cross either.

And his name is the Holy Spirit. And he will carry that cross for you. He said to me, this this man called the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity will take what is mine and he will show it to you.

Everything I want for you, I delighted to win it for you. Everything I bought on Calvary, everything that became mine is now yours. And the Holy Spirit now will take it and show it to you.

And all you have to do is reach out. And if you understand, it's my delight to empower you. It's my delight to cover you.

It's my delight to have you represent this heart that man can know nothing about if he doesn't know the love of God. And at the end of the church of Ephesus, he says these words and all of a sudden they became alive. He said to him that overcomes whoever overcomes this working for the father's approval.

This working religion that can never pray enough. It can never read enough. It can never witness enough.

It can never cut enough wood for the heavenly father. And we'll end up screaming at God one day. If that's why you're doing what you're doing.

I mark my words, you'll end up screaming at God one day. You'll be angry. And if you're not angry, maybe it not be a verbal anger, but it'll be a heart anger.

You'll end up in the house of God and you'll your hands are down. Your voice is closed. You have so little to praise him for now.

You hear everything that is preached to you through the screen of failure. No matter what I preach, you're just going to see failure because you've been trying to please somebody who's already pleased. Does that make any sense to you? How do you please somebody who's already pleased? You can't add to what he's already done.

You can't do more to earn favor because it's already earned in Christ. And he says, whoever overcomes this, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Now, what do you suppose that tree of life is? I want to suggest to you, it's Jesus Christ himself.

I want to suggest to you this tree of life in the midst of the paradise was planted on a hill 2000 years ago. And on that tree of life, there was a redemption and the power to live a Christian life bought on that tree of life. And he says, if you will overcome this religion of works and this religion of human and self effort, I will let you eat of this tree of life, which is Christ, who is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The very center of God's kingdom is Jesus Christ. He is the center of the wheel within the wheel. Everything is about him.

It's all through him. It's in him. Everything is Jesus Christ.

If you will just simply come back. He says, I'll give you back your candlestick. And the candlestick is the true passion of God for the work of God and for a lost generation.

It doesn't mean we sit home and do nothing. As a matter of fact, I do more today than I did then. But I do it with a lot less effort because it's not I that is doing it anymore.

It's Christ who is alive and living within me. I'm eating tonight. I'm eating tonight from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

I'm eating of this life. I'm walking in this life. I'm trusting in this life.

This is the same God who said to Ezekiel, I'll give you a new mind. I'll give you a new heart. I'll give you a new spirit.

I'll soften your heart. And no longer will my law be words written in stone, but I'll take it with my own finger and write it on your heart. You'll be a nation of kings and priests unto me.

You'll go out. You'll have a word in your heart, a compassion in your voice. You'll not be preaching a hard religion that the majority of society can't live.

You'll be preaching the passion of a God who has done it all. That whosoever will may come and freely embrace the life that is theirs in Jesus Christ. It's the ultimate irony in a sense.

You do more with less energy. I'm more strength at 52 than I had at 37. It doesn't make sense in the natural.

Other than I'm not preaching out of my own strength. I'm not working to please my heavenly father. He's already pleased.

I'm not trying to gain his love. He loves me. There was a great theologian once.

Which studied and preached the marvelous revelations that were given to him throughout the years. And at the end of his life, a young protege asked him. He said, brother, can you tell me of all your study and all your teaching and all your preaching.

What is the greatest truth that you've ever learned? He just stood there with bated breath waiting for this incredible revelation. The older man looked at him and said, Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me so.

It is the greatest revelation. And ironically, it's the first thing you learned, isn't it? He said to the church of Ephesus, get back to your first love. I loved you first.

Get back there. It was my joy over you that becomes your strength. You ever heard the saying the joy of the Lord is your strength.

It's his joy, not yours. It's the joy of the Lord that is your strength. It's his joy to forgive you.

It's his joy to cover you. It's his joy to empower you. It's his joy to pick you up when you fall.

It's his joy. It's the delight of his life and heart to give you the strength that you and I need to be a living testimony for him. It's the joy of the Lord that is our strength.

It's his first. Then it's ours. First love is his first.

And then it's ours. And when you and I come to that understanding, we put away the axe, put away the chainsaw. So, Father, you love me.

After I came to the knowledge of this truth, the Lord enabled me to love my father, my human father. I was no longer looking for him to say I love you, but he enabled me to love him. And he told me, he said, Carter, honor your father, honor him, and you will win him to me.

I prayed for him for 26 years. And I remember when he got cancer. And the cancer took such control of his body that there was a lot of very strong odor.

And I was able to touch him in the hospital because the love of God was now in me. I wasn't looking for anything from my earthly father anymore. I had completely forgiven any lack, and I loved him as a son should love his father.

I would hold his hand and stroke his hair and talk to him. And I remember when he was allowed to come home for a season and he had a colostomy on his side. And because he was full of cancer, the discharge and the odor of this thing was terrible.

And I remember he laid in bed one time and wouldn't deal with it. He just wouldn't get up. He wouldn't empty it.

He wouldn't deal with it. He was just losing heart. And I went into his room and I said, Dad, you've got to get out of bed.

You've got to deal with this. Now, my father was not a man you could tell much to do. I don't want to tell you.

Even at 81, he was very strong still. But I got him out of bed, took him in the bathroom, set him down in front of the toilet. And I said to him, now, here's what you have to do.

Now, the nurses had said, and my mother said, the odor was so strong from this because of the cancer that you'd gag and choke. And they told me to take a mask, put it on, and they had that fruit spray you put in so you couldn't smell this. And I remember thinking, I'm not putting a mask on.

This is my father. I'm not ashamed of my father, just as God is not ashamed of me. And I don't mind the smell.

And I remember sitting in front of the toilet and opened this thing and I didn't smell anything. But it was just that the Lord just took it away. I mean, it was as strong as ammonia, really.

But it didn't matter to me. This is my father. I emptied it and I got this stuff all over my hands.

You know, if you're going to reach somebody sometimes, folks, you've got to get your hands dirty. That's what God did. When he came and hugged his son, when he hugged me on the road, I had the smell of death all over me.

But he took it on himself. He wasn't ashamed to hug me because he loved me. And this stuff was all over my hands.

And I cleaned this colostomy bag and this open water and put it all back together. And I said, this is what you have to do. And he was just sitting there looking at me.

For once, he had not much to say. Took him, put him back in bed. And I said, Dad, I've been praying for you for 26 years.

And God gave me a promise that I would see you saved before you die. I said, now, for three minutes, I'm going to tell you one more time what it means to be saved. And three minutes was a stretch because you didn't overlap your hand with this man.

And I told him God gave me the words in three minutes, one more time. And I made sure it was three minutes, the plan of salvation. For the first time, I think, ever, he listened to me.

He just laid there with nothing to say. I could tell he was thinking about what I had to say. I came back to church here.

This is, I guess, two years ago. Is that right? Two years ago. Came back to church.

It was around Christmas time. And was in church. And my sister called and said, Dad is dying.

You better come. The Holy Spirit said, don't go yet. And I remember the reports are coming in.

He's not going to live long. It could be a matter of hours. Even some people in the church said to me, you better go.

Your father's dying. The Holy Spirit said, don't go yet. I remember staying, preaching the Sunday service.

And then Monday morning, the Lord says, go now. I called. I got an airline ticket.

I flew in. And it was 2 o'clock in the afternoon. My brother was in the hospital with my father.

This is my brother who really never calls me, never talks to me. After I got saved, I didn't have a lot of good communication with my family. And I was planning on seeing my dad at 7 in the evening.

And my brother called me about 2. And he says, I'm waiting at the hospital. Are you not coming? And I thought, well, this is odd. He never calls me at any time for anything.

And I thought, maybe I better go. So I went to the hospital. I was just walking in the room.

And Teresa called me on her cell phone, my cell phone. She said, I'm with Pastor Neal in Olean. And we have a burden to pray for you right now.

And so I knew, walking in the room, this is the time. This is God's moment. My father was sitting inside the door in a chair.

I leaned down beside him. I said, Dad, have you been praying? Now, I haven't seen him for a week or so, a week and a half. And he said, I've been praying all day.

And I said, are you ready to pray with me now? And he said, yes, I'm ready to pray with you. Oh, folks, I want to tell you something. I prayed a long sinner's prayer.

We started in Genesis, went through the wilderness. I went seven times around Jericho. I wanted to be sure.

I picked him up. I helped him to get up, got back into bed. I held his hand, stroked his hair.

We had the finest hour I think it's possible to have. Between a father and his son. Everything that needed to be said over the years and hadn't been was said.

We talked about heaven, talked about forgiveness. And then just out of the blue, he says to me, I love you. It's amazing because I wasn't looking for it.

The last thing he said to me that day was, I said, Dad, when I get to heaven, I want you to be there. He greeted me and he said, I'll be there, son. When you get there, I'll be there.

When I left the hospital that day, you would have thought I was insane. If a policeman would have seen me, they might have arrested me. I went out on the street.

It was Christmas time. And, you know, the lights were stuck up all over the place. I was shouting and crying and screaming.

I said, God, it just doesn't get any better than this. I could hardly wait for that night to go back and continue this conversation with my father. But that afternoon, he slipped into a coma and never fully came out.

And that was the last hour that I had had to share with him. And went into Christ because I had learned that God loves me. I was able to forgive and release and let go, stop striving.

What a marvelous Savior we serve. What a life of miracles. My sister hadn't spoken to me for almost 20 years.

Other than, hi, how are you? How are the kids? Just a few little things. Nothing intense. We went to the funeral parlor to arrange for the funeral.

And my family's all Catholic, so I didn't really care. You know, they could do their candles and smoke. It didn't matter to me.

My father's in heaven, so they could do whatever they wanted. We were sitting there, and I thought, I'm not going to push anything here. And my sister said, I want the telephone number of the priest.

And the fellow said, why? She said, because I'm going to call him. He's not speaking. My brother is speaking at my father's funeral.

Folks, I had aunts, uncles, cousins, my family. I got up in the Catholic church with a priest sitting on the platform behind me. And I said, I don't have to guess.

I don't have to hope. I know my father's in heaven. Let me tell you why.

Paul, let me finish off with this in Romans chapter 8. I'll just read it to you for time's sake. Romans 8, 35. Who shall separate us from the theology of Christ? Is that what your Bible says? No, it seems to be the word love is in there.

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, as it is written, for thy sake we're killed all the day long. We're counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we're more than conquerors.

Through him that loved us. I'm persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the theology of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Did I say something wrong tonight? No, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God.

Paul knew this. Paul had this. Every great saint of God who's ever amounted to anything has known this.

The love of God is a love that caused him to die, and to receive us as sons and daughters, and to cleanse us completely from all of our sin, and bring us to a place where we are fully accepted. And when we have this understanding, he sends us out now, with the message of this compassion, to a generation that is lost, without hope, and without an understanding of what it means to have a heavenly Father. I pray for you tonight, with all my heart, that if you are chopping wood for God, it's time to put the axe down.

If you are cutting, painting fences, cutting grass, doing all of these things for God, it's time to put it away, and it's time to say, God, I'm just going to come and let you rejoice over me. I'm going to let you rejoice over me. Folks, I spoke this in Texas to a thousand or so pastors, and you'd have to be there to see what happened that night, when good men of God, good women of God, have traveled the globe, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Finally, as a revelation, it hit some of them. I've been doing all this work, and I haven't stayed long enough to let God rejoice over me. To understand that God loves me with an incredible and an everlasting love.

I will go out, I'll even do more, but I will not do it to please a God who's already pleased, because I've come to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. I say to you tonight, it's time to stop cutting wood for your heavenly Father. It's time to let Him rejoice over you with singing.

You'll go out this door, you'll likely do more for Him, but you'll do it with a whole lot less human effort, because it's the Holy Spirit within you that will be carrying you now, as I have learned to let Him carry me in the last 37 to 52. Come on, quickly, quickly, quickly, what is that? Fifteen years! I told you I wasn't very good in school. Let's stand.

Hallelujah. Would you just let God love you? Not asking anything of you tonight, but just come and let Him love you. Open your heart to His love.

Receive His love. Let this become the central focus of why you live for God, why you serve God. When you go out the door, I promise you, you'll have a candlestick, which means a testimony of something of God that nobody in religion knows, but those who know Him intimately.

Nobody knows it. All religion is bitter and hard, except for that which truly represents the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. God in heaven, thank you.

God, thank you. Just keep coming. Wherever you are, just let Him love you.

Hallelujah. Greg, please just take us to a song. I want you to hear the Lord rejoicing over you tonight.

Do you know that He rejoices over you? On all your failure, all your frustration, all of the things that you and I do, do you not know tonight that He rejoices over you? If you were the only one, whoever would have come to Him, He still would have died. That's how much He loves you. He would have come and walked for 33 years if He even just knew that there was only you that would come to Him.

That's how precious you are in His sight. And He didn't receive you to make you a slave. He received you to make you a son and a daughter of God.

He received you to cover you and empower you and to send you out as a representative of His love. Not as theology. His theology is great.

Thank God for it. But the theology has to be undergirded with the love of God. It has to have this love of God as its foundation.

Or you'll end up working and working and working to earn something that is already yours. Hallelujah. Open your heart tonight.

It's not a time for tears unless it's tears of joy. Just let Him love you tonight. Let Him love you wherever you are.

Just let Him love you. You don't have to work to please Him. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. I pray now tonight that the candlestick remain lit in Times Square Church. That we be a people who are able to love because we know that we are loved of God.

I pray tonight that you give us the power to love every teenager in this city, every high schooler, every mom, every dad, every child, every person as created in the image of God. Help us to see men as precious, passionately precious to the heart of God. Oh, Lord, I thank you, God.

If I never learned anything else, I thank you for this truth that you showed me that you love me. God, I give you praise and honor and glory. I thank you from the very depths of my heart.

Oh, Lord. Oh, God. Oh, God, thank you.

Thank you, Jesus. Give Him a shout of praise tonight. Just give Him a shout of praise.

This is the conclusion of the message.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11731.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/carter-conlon/chopping-wood-for-father/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**