

# The Covering

by Carter Conlon

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*Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the necessity of seeking God's covering to find strength and provision in challenging times.*

**Duration:** 34:32

**Scripture:** Proverbs 22:3, Proverbs 27:12, Matthew 5:13, Luke 14:28-34

**Topics:** "Weakness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by asking the audience if they have enough strength to face the challenges and temptations of the world. He emphasizes the importance of counting the cost before embarking on any endeavor, just as one would do before building a tower. The speaker then questions whether individuals have enough power in their testimony and faith to make a difference in their communities, especially in a society that is rapidly declining. He concludes by highlighting the need to forsake all and be fully committed to being a disciple of Christ, as stated in Luke 14:33. The sermon encourages listeners to have a clear vision, be prepared for evil, and seek wisdom from Proverbs 27:12.

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## Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning about the covering. Covering, it's a very simple message, but the truth of it is very, very profound. Luke chapter 14, please, if you go there with me, Luke 14, simply called the covering.

Father, Lord, as we prepare to unlock this passage of Scripture, I ask you for the touch of heaven to be on my life and on this sanctuary. Lord, you've said through the apostle Paul that our faith is not to rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. And so Lord, let your word create a hunger in us for your life to be lived in us and through us.

Help us, Lord, to put away weakness and to go where the strength of God really is. Give me grace to speak this, give all of us grace to hear it, to respond to it. I thank you, Lord God, in Jesus name.

Amen. The covering, Luke chapter 14, beginning at verse 28. For which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it.

Lest after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying this man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king does

not sit down first and consider whether he's able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000. Or else while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.

So likewise, whoever of you who does not forsake all that he has, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land or for the downhill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Now, these are not just random thoughts from the mind of the son of God. It all, believe it or not, interconnects. It's one single thought when you begin to study scripture that way and study the verses that come before a thought and the verses that come after.

You see, we have chapters and verses, but when this text was originally written, there were no such things. It was just one continuous thought that was written down. And I want to examine this passage of scripture in that light.

Now, Proverbs 27, 12 says, a prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished. A prudent person, a thinking person, a rational person sees the season in which he or she is living. And according to the word of God, by estimation says, I'm not able, I'm not able to withstand what's coming against me.

There's a feebleness in my heart. There's a fear in my life. There's a lack of strength in my character.

And I see what's coming. And if you're reading the news, you see what's coming. Many, I don't have to tell you, you could be telling me this morning, pastor, you don't know the half of it.

You see, because I know that you live and you work in the secular world, in a secular community. And you know what people are beginning to say, and you know how they're beginning to think. And if you're a rational person, there can be a measure of fear come into your heart and say, Oh God, how am I going to survive in the midst of this? And where am I going to find the strength to be what you're calling me to be? A good example of this, because the scripture that says that the prudent man foresees evil and hides himself.

The word hide means to hide by covering. He sees evil and he covers himself. So I want to just expound on that theme a little bit.

An example of that is in the book of Ruth chapter three. Now, Ruth was a young girl who was brought into the promised land through relationship. She was not an Israelite.

She was a Moabite, but she married a young man from Israel. And by virtue of that marriage relationship, she was brought in to that place of promise. Just like you and I have been, none of us were born into salvation.

We came into salvation by relationship. We were all outside of the kingdom of God, no matter how good we tried to be. The scripture says we'd all fallen short of the glory of God.

There was not one in right relationship with God, not even one. By the mercy of God, we married in a sense, the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, the son of God. We came into relationship with God through Christ.

And now we are as Ruth was grafted in to the promised land. And she followed her mother-in-law after her husband's death into the promised land. But even though it was a promised place, she saw the difficulty of

life, which laid before her.

It was the land of promise. And don't forget that Ruth came into that because of relationship and also because she heard, as well as her mother-in-law heard, a promise that there was bread there. There was provision there.

She came into the promised land, but life was difficult in this place. And you know, some are here today and you say, pastor, I came to Christ believing that everything was going to be easy and it's gotten harder in some measure. And once she understood that her best efforts could not help her escape her lack of resources, that her efforts could produce, she would go out every day and she would go out into the, this is supposed to be a place where there's a, there's a, there's plentiful bread, but she goes out into the field every day and she's consigned to just picking up the scraps of wheat and barley that people have left behind.

Everybody else has gone through and they seemingly, they got all the bread. You ever felt that way in your life? Everyone else is getting all the bread and I'm getting none. If I hear one more testimony of victory, I'm going to scream.

Doesn't anybody, anybody go through the valley of the shadow of death? Do you ever feel that way? Is there anybody who relates to me? I'm so happy you got a new car. I'm so happy it was given to you last week, but mine's not running at the moment and I can't afford a ticket for the subway. And when she realized that all she could produce was just this little bit of strength and provision to get her and her mother-in-law through another day.

And when she realized that it, it wouldn't suffice there, when she saw, is this all life is going to be? Is this the promised land? And that's a legitimate question. You can ask God that question and say, is this all that my life is supposed to be? Is there something I'm missing? Is there more for me? When she realized that her own efforts could only produce so much strength, promise and future, then she sought the covering of the one that she knew could provide for all of her needs. And the scripture tells us in Ruth chapter three, beginning verse seven, let me read it to you.

And after Boaz had eaten, now Boaz is the, he was called a kinsman redeemer. He was the one who had the right to not only bring into his family, those that found themselves outside of this place of abundance, but he had the right to give them life and the right to bring them into the fullness of his inheritance. Just as Christ, when he rose from the grave and ascended to the right hand of God, we know today that everything that he inherited became ours.

Everything he won is mine. It's yours. The fullness of peace, the fullness of provision, the fullness of boldness, the fullness of courage, the fullness of the spirit of God, the fullness of wisdom, understanding knowledge, as much as this human body can contain.

When Christ was sat down at the right hand of all authority and victory, his victory became mine and his victory became yours. That's what this man Boaz represented. So here comes Ruth now in the evening.

It says, after Boaz had eaten and drank, his heart was cheerful. He went to lie down at the end of a heap of grain. In other words, he was resting in a place of incredible provision.

She's going out, gleaning the fields every day and coming home with just this little bit of supply that barely gets she and her mother-in-law through to the next day. But now she knows there's a man who has

supply. There's a man who can redeem her.

There's a man who can graft her into that place of provision and give her the life that this place of promise gives to those who belong to Christ. He went to lie down at the end of a heap of grain and she came softly, uncovered his feet and lay down. Remember it says the prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself by covering.

She came into that granary and she just uncovered the blanket that was around his feet and she laid down beside him. It says, now it happened at midnight. The man was startled at the darkest part of the day, may I say.

And he turned himself and there a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, who are you? And she answered, I'm Ruth, your maid servant. Take your maid servant under your wing for you are a close relative.

Take me under your wing. Oh God, Jesus, son of God, don't let me live beneath my inheritance any longer. Must be the cry of the bride of Christ now.

I have lived gleaning. I've lived on leftovers. I've lived on so little.

When you sit in a storehouse and you have a supply that is greater than anything I could ever procure with any amount of my own effort and strength. And I see the day ahead of me is going to require more than I have. And so in humility, and it requires humility.

We come in and lay down as it is at the feet of Christ and say, you redeemed me. You have the power to redeem me from poverty in my spirit. You have the power to redeem me from hopelessness in my mind.

You have the power to redeem me from cowardice in my testimony. You have the power to redeem me from selfishness. It causes me to cling on to every little bit of stuff that I get and have nothing left over for anybody else.

God, you have the power to make me other than what I am. You have the power to take me somewhere. I could never go in my own strength and you have the power to make me what I could never be.

In our opening text, Jesus is asking this question, which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it. And if you can see what lies ahead of you and you have an honest heart, I'm asking you the question this morning, do you have enough strength to be victorious there? Do you have enough strength to stand in your college young person? And when that professor mocks Christ and mocks God and mocks God's word, do you have enough resource to stand? Do you have enough power to make a difference? Do you have enough power in your testimony, your song, everything that God has made you into to affect those in your neighborhood, your community who are going into an ever deepening trajectory of darkness? Do you have enough power to make a difference? Can you withstand evil in the evil day? Is there something of faith in your heart that's sufficient to turn evil back that causes you to stand in the street corner of hell itself and say, I am going to make a difference by the grace of God within me. I'm not going to walk around in my neighborhood like somebody that's just gleaning for enough strength to get through the next day because my father owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

My God has all strength. Can you survive? It says, which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down and count the costs, whether he has enough to finish it lest after he's laid the foundation and is not able to finish all who see it begin to mock him. Lest he stands up and says, I just want you to know I'm a Christian, but has nothing.

There's no resource behind it to back that statement saying this man began to build, but was not able to finish or what King going to make war against another does not sit down first and consider whether he's able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000. You see folks, why this message is on my heart today is because we are going into a fierce battle. Not just today, but tomorrow, not just tomorrow, but the day after hell is on a roll right now.

Darkness feels like it has the upper hand. There's, there is a move underfoot to eradicate everything associated with God and Christ out of this society, out of our schools, out of our colleges, out of our politics, out of our homes, out of every facet of society to vilify, to marginalize, to demean, to cast down, to castigate the people of God, as if you and I are worthless of no value, have nothing to contribute to society. We're only dividers and destroyers of this wonderful new order that much of our world seems to be embracing.

And so the question is, do you have enough resource to meet this? That's coming against you. That's what Jesus was asking his disciples. And a prudent person takes an honest inventory of his own heart.

And there's no shame in saying, no, I don't. I can't. I don't have the courage.

Do you have enough strength to survive the onslaught of darkness coming our way? Do you have enough light within you to both see the bridegroom at midnight and point the way to others to find him? Do you have enough oil in your lap when it gets dark and confusion begins to abound on an even deeper level to say, behold, the bridegroom come out. I see him. Can you see him with me? Do you see the hand of God? Do you have sufficient light in your oil in your lap? Do you have confidence, direction, and a word of hope for others when everything around them and us seems to be falling apart? Like the apostle Paul, when the ship that took a wrong journey begins to come into a storm, everyone loses heart and the whole thing starts falling apart.

Do you have the confidence of the apostle Paul that God placed within him? Is it within you? Do you have a word of hope? Do you have a direction for life that can not only bring you to the place that God has for your life, but it will bring all those that are willing to listen to your voice? Do you have enough strength to survive the cursing of your good name and character? Can you survive the accusing of your right being wrong? Can you survive the unjust blame that will be heaped upon you as this rebellious society begins its eventual decline? And believe me, it's decline is coming and it's here now and it's declining rapidly. Do you have enough power to stand face first into the wind, just as Jesus said of John the Baptist, and yet still remain unshaken when things don't turn out the way you thought they would? John had a clear view in his mind of what it was going to look like. He baptized the son of God and he knew it.

He had a clear view of what this kingdom was going to look like, only to end up in jail himself, somewhat confused, asking his disciples to go to Jesus and say, would you ask him, are you the one or do we look for another? In other words, John was saying, Jesus, I really didn't ever think it was going to go this way when I baptized you and when I heard of your power and when I sent people to follow you. But Jesus turned and said to the crowd, what do you think John is, a reed that can be shaken by the wind? No, there was something inside of that man that gave him enough power to stand and not lose his testimony, even

when it didn't turn out the way he thought it was going to. A lot of people give up on God because when their life doesn't turn out, they create this idyllic view in church of what their life is going to be and when they, and it doesn't turn out that way, the wind comes and just carries them away like chaff.

The devil comes with his dirty voice and says, God has failed you. God made promises he didn't keep and you can be sure he did that with John. You can be sure he tried to do it with Paul.

You can be sure that forked tongue was whispering in the ears of Daniel as well. Look, 1432, it says, or else while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and ask conditions of peace and see the point is, if you can't say yes, if you can't honestly say yes, I have the resources it will take to stand within me, then you're in danger of two things. Number one, making peace with your own powerlessness and just saying, well, that's the way it is.

I'm just powerless. I'm always going to be powerless or even worse, beginning to agree with your enemies. You see, that's why even many in the evangelical church today are splitting off on the issue of gay marriage because they don't have in themselves the power to stand for what they know is the truth.

And they're beginning to agree with that, which is a lie and that which is powerless. And that's what Jesus said. Consider the cost of what you're about to do.

Consider the cost of building this tower. And do you have a sufficient resource to finish this journey? Or are you going to be one who stands and is mocked at when you started to build and can't finish? And here now is the key. So likewise, whosoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Now, listen, this is not about material goods. This is not about giving up your house, your lands, your home, your job and say, OK, here I am. I'm your disciple now.

That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about self-effort, self-strength, self-confidence. He's talking about everything that we think is sufficient.

Remember, the context of this verse is doing an analysis of whether you have sufficient material to build or sufficient strength to fight against an opposing army that is stronger than you are. And so if you realize that you can't win the battle in your own strength, then you put away your army of 10,000 and you put away your materials that can't build the tower and you go to the threshing floor. You come under the covering of one who has the supply that you're going to need.

You put away what you have. Jesus was not making a restriction for people following him. He was simply making a statement.

You can't means you won't be able to. If you don't forsake your own strategies, your own ways of thinking that things should be done, if you don't find the strength of God, you can't. In other words, you don't have enough to finish the tower.

Your army is not big enough to stand against this opposing enemy. And so you're called to let it all go. I must forsake the limitations of my own self and find the covering and the resources of the one who can supply me with the power of his endless life.

It's that simple. I must die and he must live. He must become the source of my strength.

I must have enough sense to do a careful analysis and say, Carter Conlon, in his own strength and with his own zeal, and even with all the history of what I've traveled through in the past, does not have enough strength to get through the days that are coming and are going to face all of us. And so I have to, just like you, put away my little bucket of grain and say, stand before God and say, God, I don't have the strength to get through what I'm going to have to face in the coming days. So I'm asking you, I'm asking you for your covering.

I'm asking you to grab me into the supply. I come to you in humility. I don't come with a pedigree.

I don't come with a list of things I've done or not done. I just come to you. I just come in my poverty.

I just come in my need. I just come because you are my kinsmen redeemer. That's why I come.

I come because I realize that I'm carrying home a quarter grain every day, and you are sitting in a threshing floor at the foot of a mountain of supply of all that I will ever need to be everything that I'm called to be. You see, Ruth forsook the hopelessness of her own efforts, and she sought to hide in the covering of the one who could redeem her. And you know the story.

She was grafted into his strength, and with him, she became an inheritor of life and bore witness to the mercy, the keeping power, and the hope which can belong to all in God. She became one in the lineage of Jesus Christ, the man, the son of God. She was grafted into the physical lineage of Jesus Christ.

She bore a child that was the great-grandfather of David. Now through her story, you and I are given a thirst for something in our own futures that only Jesus can give. Remember Pastor William, I listened to one of his messages online when I was on vacation, and he said, I'm not going to live my life telling somebody else's story.

When I get to heaven, it's going to be my story that's going to be told. I'm going to tell my story. I'm going to have my own.

And it's wonderful what Ruth did, but as she humbled herself, as she found her kinsman redeemer as the supply, not only of grain, but of not only the physical supply, but the spiritual supply that grafted her into the very lineage of Jesus Christ became hers. It's something in me. For more of God, it should stir something in you as well.

This can't be just something that's done for just a select few. It was in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, the prophets saw something far off. Many never got to see it, but God had spoken to them of a day when God's Holy Spirit was going to be given to all freely, young and old, rich and poor, men and women, every race, every class, this storehouse was going to open and the supply of God was going to be made available.

It wouldn't be just Elijah empowered to outrun a chariot. It wouldn't be just one of the prophets doing miracles. It would be a whole body of people that would be invited into the storehouse of that supply of an endless life.

And through us, God would create a thirst in this generation for himself in others. My life is supposed to create thirst. If I'm not creating thirst in you, for God, as your pastor, something is wrong with my life.

I should be living. I should be moving. I should be breathing in him.

I should be growing in grace. There should be something coming from my heart that causes you to thirst for more of God. That's why he finishes this passage by saying, salt seems to be a totally unrelated thought, but it isn't.

That's why it says salt is good. But if the salt has lost its flavor, if the salt is not creating thirst, how shall it be seasoned? You and I are the only Bible this generation is going to read now. The Bible is out of our schools.

The Bible is out of our colleges. The Bible is being kicked out of our government. The Bible is being eradicated from almost every facet of life now in this society.

But I tell you, the word of God in you cannot be bound. The word of God cannot be put away. They can burn every bound book they want in the nation, but God's word is a living word.

God's supply is an endless supply and God allows you and I to come into that place of his provision and to be so strengthened, to be so encouraged, to be so given another life, another hope, another future that people see us. Even in the midst of persecution, people see us and they say, whatever you have, I'm thirsty for that. Whatever it is you have of God in you, whatever it is you found, that's what I want.

So the question comes that if my testimony in my life has lost the ability to create thirst, what shall I do? We go back to our original scripture in Proverbs, a prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself by covering, but the simple pass on and are punished. The prudent man says, God, I don't care what anybody says. I'm going to you.

I'm going to admit my need. I'm going to ask you to cover me. I'm going to ask you to graft your life into mine.

I'm going to ask to be a co-inheritor of your provision. I'm not living less in the promised land than what I can and is available to me through Jesus Christ. I'm not staying in mediocrity.

When you said my life is to be a testimony, an undeniable testimony of the reality of God. So that's where I'm going. And that's how I'm going to live my life.

The proud will never find this because the proud can't bend their knee. The proud can't come in and lay down at the feet of the kinsman redeemer and say, cover me, please. I need you.

But if we're going to get through the days that are ahead of us, we're going to need the covering all of us. So I want to encourage you this morning to just do what I'm doing now. It seems to be a constant prayer.

Oh, Jesus, cover me. When I was a cop and we'd be going into a building where there could be danger inside, we'd say to the guys that are still outside, cover us. We're going in.

Well, that's what I'm saying to God now, cover me. I'm going in. I'm just going into whatever you have for my life.

That's where I'm going. And I know I will need strength more than I have. And there's no shame in admitting that.

And so I want to encourage you today. For everyone who's here in the sanctuary in North Jersey, that's listening online as well. Has the courage just to say, Lord God, this pastor just preached my life.

I need the strength of God just to stand in my own home. I need the strength of God to be a father, to be a husband, to be a wife, to be a mother. I need the strength of God to be a friend.

I need the strength of God to love my own family. I need the strength of God to not despise my boss in the workplace. I need the strength of God.

And if we just start where we start, then eventually you'll find that strength continuously increases in your life. And you too, as Ruth did, will produce a king, basically. An image of Christ, something tangible, something visible, as we just make the right choices right where you are.

That's where it all begins. That's where strength starts. And so I want to give an altar call this morning, and I want to really encourage you.

If God is tugging at your heart, if you know it's the Holy Spirit, if you're in the same place that I am and have been many times, and you just know that you can't do what you're feeling you should without the strength of God. You've weighed your resources against what comes against you, and you've come up short. I don't have enough to build that tower, and I don't have enough strength to defeat that enemy.

And if you have the courage to say it, all Ruth did is she came to the threshing floor. She laid down at his feet and said, cover me. And the kinsman redeemer, Boaz, did everything else.

He went to the gate. He bought her at the gate. He did everything.

All that was required of her is to come to the feet of the redeemer and say, cover me. That's all. I want to encourage you to do that today.

We're going to stand in a moment if God is speaking to your heart. If you truly want to be a witness in this generation, starting in your own house, then I'm going to ask as we stand, you make your way out in the balcony, go to either exit, the main sanctuary, the main aisles, and just make your way to this front of this auditorium, and we'll pray together. In the annex, you stand between the screens.

Let's stand. We're going to worship for just a few moments, and then we're going to pray together. Now, I'm just going to pray a prayer with you, and then I want to dedicate these children.

So after we pray, if you could just hold still for a moment. But the prayer is no deeper than, good to see you. Prayer is no deeper than what Ruth said to Boaz, cover me.

And if it comes from a sincere heart, God knows all of the subparagraphs to that prayer. And you don't have to figure it all out. Just cover me.

You have the strength that I need. And only you can give me a supernatural life. And I don't want to live in the mediocrity of human effort to try to promote a kingdom that's a supernatural kingdom.

And so God, by grace, take me out of my weakness and bring me into your strength. Father, I pray Lord for the men and women that are gathered at this altar today. Lord, you hear the cry of every heart.

And you showed us the story of Boaz immediately getting up and saying, just rest in here. I'll look after this. And he did.

And so Father, we thank you that we can put our confidence in you today. We can trust you, Jesus, that you won't despise our prayer, even if it's only two words, cover me, cover me Lord. You won't despise it because you know what's in the heart when we ask it.

We want to be grafted into our inheritance in Christ. We want to make a difference in this world, Lord. And so Lord, I just join with my brothers and sisters who are just looking for that covering of God again, the passion to live for you, to love you, to love people, to go forward when everything looks dark, to believe that we can make a difference.

When everything around is screaming, we can't. God, I thank you for the covering for your kingdom is a supernatural kingdom. And it has always shocked and astounded men.

So Father, I thank you for it. Thank you for blessing these men and women in Jesus name.

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