

Warrior or Worrier – Part One

A sermon on Psalm 73

Preached by Elder Roland Taylor • Bethel Baptist Church, Macclesfield • 16 August 2026

Hello and welcome to the sermon podcast for Bethel Baptist Church, Macclesfield. We hope this sermon encourages and inspires you. Hopefully, you will join us for our Sunday service, Sundays at 10:30. We would love to meet you in person. Today's sermon is Warrior and Worrier, part one, by Elder Roland Taylor.

You must keep reading your Bibles. You must keep reading your Bibles. And the reason is that we know that the Bible, the scripture, is God's word. It is God's inspired word. It is words that have been breathed by God, and God speaks through his word. And you can read the same verse over and over again, and then one day God will say something to you through that verse. And a couple of weeks ago, I read Psalm 73 again, and it was like having something heavy hit me between the eyes. And God said I should speak on this.

Psalm 73 — it's a Psalm, one of the ten Psalms written by a man called Asaph, who was one of the people appointed by David to oversee worship in the temple. And one of the things that struck me when I read it a couple of weeks ago is how brutally honest Asaph is in his Psalm. Let's read it together.

"Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, 'How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?' This is what the wicked are like — always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge. I will tell of all your deeds."

And this is what the word of God says. And we're going to unpack that Psalm a bit, because the title of what I want to say to you is really: are you a warrior or a worrier? And there we have my two friends. The one on the left, her name is Hilda — I used to know a Hilda, her name means "battle." And the one on the right, I've called Walter — he looks like a Walter to me. And so, are you a warrior or a worrier?

I'm going to speak about this next week as well, slightly differently, because God's put this Psalm on my heart. And when I was preparing this, I discovered that I'd already spoken on anxiety back in April, and yet God has said, "Come back to it."

So, living as a Christian can be hard — at least sometimes. And it's hard because we have to struggle against all those habits and instincts that we acquired before God saved us, and we have to struggle against attacks that come from the evil one. Life as a Christian can be hard, not always, but certainly sometimes. And so we're going to look at what we can learn from Psalm 73.

But of course, for that, let's just remember what Paul says in Ephesians. He says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." And we need to be equipped so that we can stand, so that we can be strong.

Now, let's look at these two. Hilda is wearing — if you look carefully — her belt of truth. She's reading her Bible. She reads bits of it every day, and she's coming to learn God's truth, and it's giving her perspective on herself, on God, on the world. That is true — she is wearing her belt of truth. But Walter, on the other hand, is wearing his elasticated waistband of uncertainty. He's not sure. He doesn't read his Bible very often. The things that he learned at Sunday school, he's forgetting. So he's not equipped with a belt of truth.

Hilda is wearing a breastplate of righteousness — if you knock it, it will clang. And that righteousness is a righteousness given to her by Jesus Christ. Whereas poor old Walter is wearing his flannel shirt of "I hope I'm doing well enough." There's no comparison.

Look at Hilda's boots — those are serious boots. You're not going to push her off her feet easily. They are the boots, the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. But what's Walter wearing? He's wearing his slippers. He's not ready for anything — he's not even ready to put the bins out. But Hilda is; look at her boots.

Hilda's got her shield, a shield of faith — the shield that extinguishes all the flaming arrows shot by the evil one. Hilda has sorted out whom she trusts in; she trusts in God to protect her. She's wearing that shield of faith. Walter has forgotten his — it's probably under the bed somewhere.

Hilda's wearing her helmet, the helmet of salvation. She knows with certainty that God has saved her, and nobody can reverse that. Walter's not got a helmet — he's left it somewhere. It might even have flowers growing in it in the back garden.

Hilda is carrying her sword, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Walter hasn't got one — it's probably in the umbrella stand, but he's not picked it up for a long time. Hilda is someone who is ready to stand her ground, and to do her share of praying for the people of God,

praying always, continuously, time after time. Walter hasn't prayed for a week. Is he ready to stand? He's probably not ready to stand against a thrown marshmallow. No wonder he looks worried — he is ill-equipped to live as a Christian.

What a Christian warrior, equipped like Hilda, is required to do, is to stand her ground. Her job isn't to attack or to wage war, because the war against the evil one will be won by the armies of heaven. And there's a spoiler alert now, because God, who knows the end from the beginning, has announced how that battle will turn out. You can read it in Revelation chapter 19. The armies of heaven will come out against the evil one, led by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it will be a resounding victory for the armies of heaven, and Satan will be absolutely destroyed. That's how it's going to come out. But the job of the Christian is to equip themselves and stand, to be able to stand and resist the attacks that come against them, and at the end, be found standing.

So let's look at Psalm 73. The man who wrote this Psalm, Asaph, starts his Psalm with a statement of where he stands. He says, "Surely God is good to Israel. Surely God is good to those who are pure in heart." That's his position, that's where he stands. And he's honest, because he goes on to say that he's not as certain as he should be about this — he's wavering. "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold." He'd nearly lost his balance, he'd tripped over something. My position is that I am convinced that God is good to the pure of heart, but I'm worried. And he's worried because he envied the arrogant when he saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Asaph was an observant man, and he found that he'd seen that people had difficulties in their lives, but he'd seen wicked people who were arrogant, and they didn't seem to face the same problems. He envied them, and this was undermining his trust in God. And he describes what his worries were. He looks at these people, and he sees that they don't have struggles like everybody else — their money gets them over all the difficulties that other people face. They're not plagued by human ills. You'd hope that somebody who was wicked would at least in some way pay for it, but this wasn't happening.

They wear their pride like a necklace. They clothe themselves with violence, because the money that's cushioning them from life's adversities is coming from other people — they're robbing other people, taking their property by force. Their hearts are callous; they don't care for the people that they rob or cheat. The evil conceits of their minds know no limits — they think of wicked schemes to get rich. They scoff, they mock the people that they persecute. They speak with malice, so they say horrible things. They threaten oppression, they boast in their arrogance about all the nasty things they're going to do to people and how they're going to take their property off them. It says, "their mouths lay claim to heaven" — they're even claiming that God is on their side, that might is right. Their tongues take possession of the earth — in their pride, they think that the earth is their personal fiefdom to be exploiting, and God will approve of what they do.

Therefore their people turn to them — so they have lots of hangers-on who benefit from their wealth. And they say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" He doesn't know, he doesn't even care. This is what the wicked are like — always carefree, they increase in wealth. And this is what Asaph is seeing: there are wicked people living around him, exploiting

others, getting rich at other people's expense, without a care in the world. And Asaph wants to believe that God is good to those who are pure in heart, and that belief is being undermined. "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped."

So what effect is this worrying about how the wicked seem to be doing so well having on him — how is it making him feel and think? He says, "Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure." I'm trying to be the sort of person that God wants me to be, and I think it's a waste of time. "In vain I've washed my hands in innocence. All day long I've been plagued; I've been punished every morning." But "if I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed your children." He's so worried about what he sees, yet he doesn't want to speak out and say, "Isn't it awful how the wicked have it their way and God doesn't seem to care." He doesn't want to say that, because he feels he would have betrayed God's children. So he started to think that trusting God had been a waste of time, futile. He's near the edge — he's almost slipped. He doesn't want to pour this out in the open, because he feels it would be a betrayal.

So what will dig him out of this pit of worry? "When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me" — it's a burden he's carrying — "until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny." So he has actually gone up the hill and gone into the temple. He has entered God's presence, and he then starts to see things differently. He's carried this burden of worry up the hill about how evil men are prospering; he gets into the sanctuary, and God begins to speak to him. He suddenly understood their destiny, and he realises that nothing that the wicked have, or are going to get, is anything to be envied.

He says, "Surely you place them, the wicked, on slippery ground, and you'll cast them down to ruin. How suddenly will they be destroyed, completely swept away by terrors." And like a dream when you wake up — when the Lord awakes, he'll simply regard them as a fading dream. All that the wicked have is what they hold in their hands, and one day they're going to drop it; one day somebody else will take it away. That is all they have — they have no future, no certainty, and they will vanish as if they've evaporated. "Surely God is good to those who are pure in heart." The pure in heart actually have an inheritance that goes beyond this world and everything that you own — that inheritance is what you'll be left with. The wicked only have what they hold, and when they lose it, they evaporate. That is their destiny.

So Asaph has started out with this burden of worry on him, and he's gone into the sanctuary, and then God has just blown it away. He's come to see what is the truth — something he can say without betraying the children of God. And he realises, once he's gone into the sanctuary, that this burden of worry had disabled him. He'd become useless. He says, "When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you." I wasn't able to serve you — I was just so busy worrying that I could do nothing. And God rolled this burden of worry away from him, and he remembers what his real situation is, the thing he'd forgotten with all his worrying, and how different his situation is from the wicked people he was worrying about.

He says, "Yet I am always with you; you hold me up by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel; afterwards you'll take me into glory. Whom do I have in heaven but you? Earth has

nothing I desire except you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Those who are far from God will perish — that's what's going to happen to the wicked. “You destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Asaph has got his head straight after entering the sanctuary and being in the presence of God, and he now finishes the Psalm with another statement of what he believes and where he stands. He was clinging on to, but had almost let go of, the belief at the beginning: “God is good to those who are pure in heart.” But now: “As for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge, and I will tell of all your deeds.”

And this is the account of a man who was rendered useless by a burden of worry. He saw a real situation, focused in on it, and just became useless to God. He couldn't function, he couldn't serve God — he was like a brute beast before God. And then he entered the sanctuary, God's presence, and God showed him that in fact the wicked people he was so worried about had nothing that would endure. They were on a slippery slope, and down at the end of the slope was destruction. But not him — because he was one of the people who'd been struggling to keep himself pure, and it's not a waste of time. “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” That's where he is, and he'd lost sight of that. God got him into the sanctuary and got him back.

Are you a warrior or a worrier? And there's one thing to take away — you have to memorise this. So repeat it to yourself every day for the next week, and it's this: “Worry weakens warriors.” Yeah, it's alliterative, three W's — “Worry weakens warriors.” If you've got a head full of worries, go home and get into the sanctuary. Get your Bible out, pray to God, and ask him to put your head straight, like he did with Asaph. Put things into perspective — the perspective of God's truth. Be like Hilda there, with the belt of truth firmly buckled around your waist.

Worry messes with your head. It can render you useless as a Christian. It needs to be addressed, and you address it in God's presence. Ask him to sort you out, and remember to praise and worship him, and to continually read his word. Keep your belt on. We're going to continue this next week, and I should probably ask you to repeat: “Worry weakens warriors.” Amen.

And I'd like to close by singing “How Deep the Father's Love for Us,” and I invite you to stand.

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