Three Hebrews in
the Fiery Furnace

he will never let
the righteous be shaken.
23 But you, God, will bring down the wicked
into the pit of decay;
the bloodthirsty and deceitful
will not live out half their days.

But as for me, I trust in you.

PSALM 56[a]

For the director of music. To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks." Of David. A miktam.[b] *When the Philistines had seized him in Gath.*

1 Be merciful to me, my God,
for my enemies are in hot pursuit;
all day long they press their attack.
2 My adversaries pursue me all day long;
in their pride many are attacking me.

3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.
4 In God, whose word I praise—
in God I trust and am not afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?

5 All day long they twist my words;
all their schemes are for my ruin.
6 They conspire, they lurk,
they watch my steps,
hoping to take my life.

ideas A LIST OF TEARS *(Psalm 56:8)*

Do you like to make lists? Some people write lists of tasks they need to do. David said that God keeps a list of our tears. This was David's way of saying that God always knows when we feel sad. He sees every tear that falls. He knows when you're disappointed, worried, or afraid. He wants you to talk to Him about these things.

7 Because of their wickedness do not[c]
let them escape;
in your anger, God, bring the nations down.

8 Record my misery;
list my tears on your scroll[d]—
are they not in your record?
9 Then my enemies will turn back
when I call for help.
By this I will know that God is for me.

10 In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise—
11 in God I trust and am not afraid.
What can man do to me?

12 I am under vows to you, my God;
I will present my thank offerings to you.
13 For you have delivered me from death
and my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before God
in the light of life.

PSALM 57[e]

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.[b] *When he had fled from Saul into the cave.*

1 Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me,
for in you I take refuge.
I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed.

2 I cry out to God Most High,
to God, who vindicates me.
3 He sends from heaven and saves me,
rebuking those who hotly pursue me—[f]
God sends forth his love and his faithfulness.

4 I am in the midst of lions;
I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—

[a] In Hebrew texts 56:1-13 is numbered 56:2-14. [b] Title: Probably a literary or musical term [c] 7 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text; Masoretic Text does not have *do not*. [d] 8 Or *misery; / put my tears in your wineskin* [e] In Hebrew texts 57:1-11 is numbered 57:2-12. [f] 3 The Hebrew has *Selah* (a word of uncertain meaning) here and at the end of verse 6.

GOD'S PROMISES

PSALM 57:1

Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.

Have you ever seen a mother bird hiding her offspring with her feathers? She does that to protect them. This verse is David's request for God's protection. He trusted God to keep him safe.

men whose teeth are spears and arrows,
whose tongues are sharp swords.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let your glory be over all the earth.

6 They spread a net for my feet—
I was bowed down in distress.
They dug a pit in my path—
but they have fallen into it themselves.

7 My heart, O God, is steadfast,
my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and make music.
8 Awake, my soul!
Awake, harp and lyre!
I will awaken the dawn.

9 I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;
I will sing of you among the peoples.
10 For great is your love, reaching to the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let your glory be over all the earth.

PSALM 58[a]

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.[b]

1 Do you rulers indeed speak justly?
Do you judge people with equity?
2 No, in your heart you devise injustice,
and your hands mete out violence on the earth.

3 Even from birth the wicked go astray;
from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.
4 Their venom is like the venom of a snake,
like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears,
5 that will not heed the tune of the charmer,
however skillful the enchanter may be.

6 Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;
LORD, tear out the fangs of those lions!
7 Let them vanish like water that flows away;
when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short.
8 May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along,
like a stillborn child that never sees the sun.

9 Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns—
whether they be green or dry—
the wicked will be swept away.[c]
10 The righteous will be glad when they are avenged,
when they dip their feet in the blood of the wicked.
11 Then people will say,
"Surely the righteous still are rewarded;
surely there is a God who judges the earth."

[a] In Hebrew texts 58:1-11 is numbered 58:2-12. [b] Title: Probably a literary or musical term [c] 9 The meaning of the Hebrew for this verse is uncertain.

MARK

Author: **Mark**
Themes: **Jesus the Suffering Servant and Son of God**
Date of Writing: **C. A.D. 55–65**

GOOD NEWS FOR HARD TIMES

If you had news that could help people who were suffering, wouldn't you share it? The new church that began to grow after Jesus returned to heaven was persecuted by the Romans. The Roman Emperor Nero killed many Christians. John Mark was one of the church leaders in Rome at this time. The Holy Spirit gave him the desire to write about Jesus' life as a way to encourage the Christians who were suffering for their faith.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND

According to Mark, Jesus was the first "action hero." Mark presents Jesus as the Son of God who healed the sick, fed thousands, cast out demons, and performed many other miracles. These actions proved that He was the Suffering Servant of God and Savior of the world. In the first half of the book, Mark focused on Jesus' powerful miracles and on His authority over sickness and demons. As Jesus traveled to places like Caesarea Philippi, He explained to His disciples that He "must suffer many things and . . . and after three days

rise again" (Mark 8:31). Mark wrote a lot about how people often suffer as a cost of following Jesus (Mark 8:34–38; 10:30, 33–34, 45; 13:8, 11–13). He also explained that people who suffer for Jesus on earth will receive great rewards when Jesus returns.

FUN FACTS ABOUT MARK

- It's an action Gospel. Mark told what Jesus *did* rather than what Jesus *said*.
- It's the shortest Gospel and probably the first Gospel to be written.
- It records eighteen miracles of Jesus, but only four of His parables.
- It's written for Christians in Rome. Mark explained Jewish customs to his Roman readers who didn't know these things.
- It's a fast-paced Gospel. Mark used the word *immediately* 12 times. He moved quickly from one event in Christ's life to the next.

[8] who freely strut about
when what is vile is honored by
the human race.

PSALM 13[a]

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

[1] How long, LORD? Will you forget me
forever?
How long will you hide your face
from me?
[2] How long must I wrestle with my
thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in
my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph
over me?
[3] Look on me and answer, LORD my
God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will
sleep in death,
[4] and my enemy will say, "I have
overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
[5] But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
[6] I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me.

Ps. 18:1-3

PSALM 14

For the director of music. Of David.

[1] The fool[b] says in his heart,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;
there is no one who does good.
[2] The LORD looks down from heaven
on all mankind
to see if there are any who
understand,
any who seek God.
[3] All have turned away, all have
become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.
[4] Do all these evildoers know nothing?
They devour my people as though
eating bread;
they never call on the LORD.
[5] But there they are, overwhelmed
with dread,
for God is present in the company
of the righteous.
[6] You evildoers frustrate the plans of
the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.
[7] Oh, that salvation for Israel would
come out of Zion!

POWER-PACKED WORDS — FOOL *(Psalm 14:1–7)*

The Bible often compares the actions of wise people and foolish people. In this psalm, a fool is a person who lives as if there is no God. Fools reject God, because they don't believe what the Bible says about Him. Instead, they make fun of the Bible and those who believe in it. Perhaps you know someone who does this. If you do, why not pray for that person? God has the power to change even those who reject Him.

[a] In Hebrew texts 13:1-6 is numbered 13:2-6. [b] 1 The Hebrew words rendered *fool* in Psalms denote one who is morally deficient.

POWER FOR LIFE — FORGOTTEN BY GOD? *(Psalm 13:1)*

Have you ever felt like God had forgotten all about you? That's how David felt when he began to write this psalm. But at the end of the psalm David remembered that God's love never fails. Sometimes we feel abandoned by God in times of sickness and other troubles. We forget that God will never forget about us. We forget that He always answers our prayers in His time and in His way.

When the LORD restores his
people,
let Jacob rejoice and Israel be
glad!

PSALM 15

A psalm of David.

[1] LORD, who may dwell in your sacred
tent?
Who may live on your holy
mountain?
[2] The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their
heart;
[3] whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
and casts no slur on others;
[4] who despises a vile person
but honors those who fear the
LORD;
who keeps an oath even when it
hurts,
and does not change their mind;
[5] who lends money to the poor
without interest;
who does not accept a bribe
against the innocent.
Whoever does these things
will never be shaken.

PSALM 16

A miktam[a] of David.

[1] Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.
[2] I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good
thing."
[3] I say of the holy people who are in
the land,
"They are the noble ones in
whom is all my delight."
[4] Those who run after other gods will
suffer more and more.
I will not pour out libations of
blood to such gods
or take up their names on my lips.
[5] LORD, you alone are my portion and
my cup;
you make my lot secure.
[6] The boundary lines have fallen for
me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful
inheritance.
[7] I will praise the LORD, who
counsels me;
even at night my heart
instructs me.
[8] I keep my eyes always on the LORD.

POWER-PACKED WORDS — THE REALM OF THE DEAD *(Psalm 16:10)*

The "realm of the dead" is ***Sheol,*** a Hebrew word that means "the grave" or "death." The people of Israel believed that Sheol was underground. This verse refers to the resurrection of Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the psalmist stated that Jesus would not be left in the realm of the dead but would come back to life after dying. Just think! The psalmist wrote these words hundreds of years before Jesus' resurrection.

[a] Title: Probably a literary or musical term

POWER FOR LIFE — KEEP YOUR WORD *(Psalm 15:4)*

God honors those who keep their word. It's better not to make promises than to make and then break them. If you say you will finish your homework, then you should finish it. If you promise to clean up your room, then be sure to do it even if you don't enjoy it. God is pleased when we do what we say we will do.