

## Psalm 56

**Title:** In God I Trust

**Author and Date:** David

**Key Verses:** Psalm 56:3, 4, 11

**Type:** Individual Lament / Trust

### **Outline**

- A. Terrors and trust (verses 1-7).
- B. Tears and trust (verses 8-13).

### **Notes**

Title: “For the Chief Musician; set to Jonath elem rehokim. A Psalm of David. Michtam; when the Philistines took him in Gath.” For “the Chief Musician”, see the notes on the title of Psalm 4. The words “Jonath elem rehokim” are found only here in the Bible. They mean something like, “the silent dove of them that are afar off”, or “the dove of the distant terebinth”. These words may have been the title of a well-known tune of the day to which this psalm was to be sung. For “Michtam”, see the notes on the title of Psalm 16 (see also the titles in Psalm 57-60). The event when David fled from Saul and “the Philistines took him in Gath” is recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10-15 (see the notes on the title of Psalm 34).

Summary: Psalm 56 is an individual lament (complaint) psalm with elements of trust. It is another “trouble and trust” psalm in a series of psalms extending from Psalm 54 through Psalm 59. In Psalm 56, the psalmist is troubled by his enemies (verses 1-2, 9), but he trusts in God all the while (verses 3, 4, and 11; see Psa. 55:23). His enemies are ruthless in their attack against him (verses 5-6), but he believes God will punish them (verse 7) and remember him for his troubles (verse 8). The psalmist is confident that God is on his side (verse 9) and he reaffirms his trust in God (verses 10-11). He promises to give thank-offerings to God (verse 12) because God has saved him from death (verse 13).

Verses 1-2: “Be merciful unto me” (KJV) is found only in the psalms in the OT. The psalmist writes that his enemies “swallow me up” (KJV). This means that the enemies overwhelm and overtake the psalmist in their attack against him, like a wild beast rushing upon its prey. They “trample” (ESV) him.

Verses 3-4: It appears that the psalmist is afraid in verse 3, but not afraid in verse 4. It is like the psalmist is saying, “When I am afraid, I will not be afraid.” It is recorded in 1 Samuel 21:12 that David was “sore afraid of Achish king of Gath.” Verse 4 reads the same as verse 11. “Flesh” (verse 4) is parallel to “man” (verse 11). The answer to

the rhetorical question in verse 4 and verse 11 is: “nothing”. Man in his feeble “flesh” is a “mere mortal” (NIV); he is nothing and powerless compared to the greatness of God.

Verses 5-6: The enemies were lurking and ruthless – out to get the psalmist. They “wrest” (KJV) or twist (misrepresent) his words, they lay in wait for him trying to ambush him, and they watch for opportunity to take him (see 1 Sam. 23:22-23; 24:9).

Verse 7: The rhetorical question is answered with “No”. This is the psalmist’s imprecatory prayer for God’s divine judgment upon his enemies. Note that God’s anger (righteous indignation toward sin), not the psalmist’s anger, will cast down the people (the enemies mentioned in the previous verses).

Verse 8: God is fully aware of all our trials, troubles, and tears. He does not ignore them. Lachrymatory is the ancient custom of collecting the tears of mourners for the dead.

Verse 10: “Jehovah” (ASV) or *Yahweh* is not found often in Book II of the Psalms.

Verse 12: The psalmist promises to offer sacrifices (see Psa. 54:6). “Thank-offerings” can be either sacrifices (Lev. 7:12-16), or songs of gratitude (“praises”, KJV).

Verse 13: To “walk before God in the light of the living” (KJV), is to serve him acceptably while living this life (see Job 33:30).

## **Questions**

1. What does the psalmist want from God (verse 1)?
2. Why does the psalmist want God’s mercy (verses 1-2)?
3. What does the psalmist do when he is afraid (verses 3, 4, and 11)?
4. What does the psalmist praise (verses 4 and 10)?
5. What do the psalmist’s enemies do to him (verses 5-6)?

6. What question does the psalmist ask (verse 7)?
7. What does the psalmist want God to do to the enemies (verse 7)?
8. What does the psalmist believe God does for him (verse 8)?
9. What is the psalmist certain about (verse 9)?
10. What does the psalmist offer to God (verse 12)?
11. What does God do for the psalmist (verse 13)?

### **Applications for Today**

1. Pray to God for help. He is merciful (verses 1-2). What do faithful Christians receive in prayer (Heb. 4:16)?
2. When you have internal trust, you can endure external trials. The righteous need to put their trust in God in times of trouble (verses 3, 4, and 11). What do faithful Christians say (Heb. 13:6)?
3. Praise the word of God (verses 4 and 10). What are some characteristics of God's word that make it praiseworthy (Psa. 12:6; 19:7-8; 33:4, 6; 119:89-90, 107, 169; 18:30)?
4. The righteous have enemies (verses 5-6). What kind of enemies do Christians have today (Acts 13:10; Phil. 3:18-19)?

5. The enemies of the righteous do not escape the judgment of God (verse 7). Who does not escape (Prov. 19:5; Mt. 23:33; Rom. 2:3; Heb. 2:3)?
  
6. God remembers the troubles and tears of the righteous. God sees where you are and knows how you feel. He has a book of remembrance for his people (verse 8). What kind of people are in God's book of remembrance (Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16)? What does the Lord tell Hezekiah he has seen (2 Kings 20:5)?
  
7. We can be certain that God is for us (verse 9). What does the psalmist say in Psalm 118:6? What certainty does Paul write about concerning God (Rom. 8:31)?
  
8. If we are ever delivered from death, let us "walk before God in the light of the living". We are delivered in order to serve God (verse 13). What deliverance did Paul experience (2 Cor. 1:10; 4:11)?