

## The Question

Psalm 18:26 states:

With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with the blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.

NKJV

At first glance, this verse can raise questions:

Does this mean God is stubborn or devious Himself?

How can a holy and unchanging God “show Himself shrewd”?

To answer these questions, we must explore the verse within its context, language, and theological framework.

## **1. Context of the Verse (Psalm 18:24-26)**

David wrote Psalm 18 as a song of thanksgiving after God delivered him from his enemies, including King Saul (see 2 Samuel 22). In verses 24-26, David reflects on how God responds to people based on their moral posture toward Him:

To the merciful → He shows mercy (Matthew 5:7).

To the blameless → He shows Himself blameless.

To the pure → He shows Himself pure.

To the crooked (or devious) → He shows Himself shrewd (resisting them).

This poetic structure emphasizes God’s perfect justice: His dealings are always consistent with His own nature and the attitude of the person toward Him.

## **2. Meaning of “Shrewd” or “Stubborn” in This Verse**

What Does “With the Devious You Show Yourself Shrewd”  
Mean?(Psalm 18:26)

The Hebrew word translated “shrewd” or “contrary” is *pathal*, meaning to twist, to be cunning, or to show oneself astute. It does not imply that God becomes sinful or morally crooked. Rather, it describes how God resists or confounds those who are perverse in heart.

Similar language appears elsewhere:

Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.

Proverbs 3:34 (NKJV)

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

James 4:6 (ESV)

These passages show a consistent biblical theme: God’s response

mirrors human posture toward Him, rewarding humility but opposing pride and stubbornness.

### **3. Theological Implications**

#### **a) God’s Holiness and Justice**

God’s nature does not change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). He remains holy and just, but His dealings with people reveal different aspects of His character. To the humble, His mercy is displayed; to the rebellious, His justice is revealed (Romans 11:22).

#### **b) God’s Resistance to Sin**

The phrase “show Yourself shrewd” means God will thwart and frustrate the plans of the crooked. This aligns with Job 5:12 (NKJV):

He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans.

Thus, the “shrewdness” of God is His holy opposition to evil — not a flaw in His character.

### c) God’s Discipline as Love

Hebrews 12:10–11 explains God’s discipline:

For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

When God resists the crooked, it is not to destroy them but to lead them toward repentance and holiness (2 Peter 3:9).

## 4. A Warning and a Comfort

This verse serves as both a warning and an encouragement:

**Warning:** Those who persist in stubbornness and perversity will face

God’s holy opposition. His justice will confound their ways (Romans 2:5-6).

**Comfort:** Those who walk in mercy, purity, and integrity will experience God’s mercy and favor (Psalm 84:11; Matthew 5:8).

In short, God deals with us according to our response to Him:

The merciful find mercy.

The pure find purity.

The rebellious encounter His resistance.

## **Practical Application**

**1. Examine Your Heart** - Are there areas where you resist God’s will? Repent and realign with His ways (Psalm 139:23-24).

**2. Pursue Purity and Mercy** - Strive for holiness, knowing that “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

**3. Embrace God’s Discipline** - Understand that His correction is an act of love meant to restore you to righteousness.

**4. Live Confidently in His Justice** - Trust that God will deal justly with the wicked and mercifully with the faithful (Romans 12:19).

### **Reflection Questions**

How does understanding God’s “shrewdness” change the way you view His justice?

In what ways have you personally experienced God’s mercy when you turned back to Him?

How should this passage motivate you to live differently this week?

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, help us to walk in purity and humility so that we may continually experience Your mercy and favor. Deliver us from crooked ways and teach us to respond to Your discipline with repentance. May our lives reflect Your holiness, and may we always delight in Your goodness. In

What Does “With the Devious You Show Yourself Shrewd”  
Mean?(Psalm 18:26)

Jesus’ name, Amen.

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