

Question: In Psalm 18:26, does this mean that God Himself is stubborn or perverse? Why does the Bible describe Him this way?

Answer: To get the full meaning, we need to look at the passage starting from verse 24.

Psalm 18:24-26 (NKJV):

Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,

According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.

With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;

With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;

With the pure You will show Yourself pure;

And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.

Notice the contrast here: to the merciful, God reveals Himself as merciful; to the blameless, He shows Himself blameless; to the pure, He shows Himself pure. But to the crooked, He shows Himself shrewd or resistant.

This doesn't mean that God is crooked or stubborn in His nature. God is good and holy at all times; He cannot be compared to sinful human beings. So why does Scripture use such language?

Think of it this way: imagine a parent with a child who continually disobeys. After repeated warnings, the parent finally says, “If you keep behaving this way, I will be strict with you. But if you change your behavior, I will treat you kindly.” Does that mean the parent is cruel or evil? Of course not. It means the child will experience the parent differently depending on his own choices—discipline if he persists in wrongdoing, kindness if he turns and does right.

In the same way, when the psalm says, “With the crooked You show Yourself shrewd,” it means that those who persist in deceit, perversity, or rebellion will find God opposing them. To them, God's actions will feel harsh. But His discipline is always just and always for correction, not destruction.

The writer of Hebrews explains it this way:

Hebrews 12:10–11 (NKJV):

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.

So, for those who resist Him, God appears as an adversary. But for those who seek purity and holiness, He reveals Himself as merciful, righteous, and holy.

This verse, then, is both a warning and a comfort:

A warning, because if we choose crookedness, we will meet God’s firm resistance.

A comfort, because if we choose righteousness, we will

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

experience His mercy, holiness, and blessing.

May the Lord help us walk in holiness so that we may always see  
His goodness.

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