



# God's Wisdom

*God protects and defends those who belong to Him.*

## PSALM 18:16-29

The world is filled with dangers. Because of this, we are thankful for those who serve in our military, law enforcement, and fire and rescue teams to protect and defend us from danger. We also lock our doors and turn on lights at night to ward off threats. We can appreciate all these things. However, believers have a Protector and Defender who is with them 24/7. No person is exempt from experiencing adversity, but God is always ready to protect and defend those who belong to Him.



**What measures do you take to protect the things you value?  
What prompts you to take these steps?**

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# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## PSALM 18

Psalm 18 is a hymn of thanksgiving. In it, David recalled the numerous victories the Lord had given him over his enemies, including Saul. A parallel version of this psalm is recorded in 2 Samuel 22.

The psalm is divided into five sections. First, David praised the Lord, who was his strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, salvation, and stronghold. David declared that the Lord was his God and worthy of praise (vv. 1-3).

In the second section, David depicted how the Lord saved him when he was about to die. He described how the Lord delivered him from his enemy by an awesome display of His power over and through nature (vv. 4-19).


In the third section, David extolled the Lord for His faithfulness (vv. 20-29).

In the fourth section, David delineated how God had prepared him for battle and gave him victories (vv. 30-45).

Finally, David returned to where he began the psalm, thanking and praising the Lord, his rock and the God of his salvation (vv. 46-50).

When David's life was in danger, he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord saved him. In Psalm 18, David recognized what the Lord had done and praised Him for it. This psalm should remind us that, just as David had his enemies, believers today do too.

The New Testament indicates the world, the flesh, the devil, and death are our enemies (1 Cor. 15:26; Eph. 2:2-3). Psalm 18 should remind us that the Lord has given us everything we need in Himself to defeat these enemies. Jesus won the victory for us and has saved us. He has equipped us with everything we need to resist our enemies. Everything God did for David He does for us in Jesus. We live and stand firm because of our victory in Him. So let us trust in the Savior and praise Him with thanksgiving just as David did.

 **As you read Psalm 18:16-29, identify all the things the Lord had done for David.**

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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## THE GOD WHO RESCUES (PS. 18:16-19)

<sup>16</sup> He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he pulled me out of deep water. <sup>17</sup> He rescued me from my powerful enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. <sup>18</sup> They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. <sup>19</sup> He brought me out to a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.

### VERSE 16

The second section of Psalm 18 is a record of how the Lord saved David from a near death experience at the hands of his enemies. Verses 4-15 detail how God supernaturally defeated David's enemies, and verses 16-19 describe how God ***reached down*** and saved him. The expressions *reached down*, ***took hold***, and ***pulled me out of deep water*** are poetic descriptions of God's stretching out His protective hand ***from on high*** to rescue David in his time of dire need.

The expression *deep water* alludes back to the beginning of this section where David described his life-threatening situation and his enemies as "torrents of destruction" (v. 4). David painted an image of himself being thrown into the turbulent depths and violent waves in the midst of a ferocious storm at sea, about to drown. From his perspective, David's situation looked hopeless. He surely would have perished if God had not intervened by reaching down and pulling him out of deep water.

It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew word translated *pulled me out* is the word used when Pharaoh's daughter had Moses pulled out of the Nile (Ex. 2:10). Moreover, Moses's name comes from this word. So David used a well-known Hebrew expression, associated with the man God used to bring about the most spectacular display of the salvation of His people in the history of Israel, to describe how the Lord had saved him.

### KEY DOCTRINE: God the Father

God is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.  
(See Psalm 147:3-5; Jeremiah 32:17.)

## VERSE 17

Given the information provided in the introduction of the psalm, it is likely when David referred to being rescued *from my powerful enemy*, he was referring to King Saul. Saul was the king when David was a very young man. David became a court musician, and before that he had been a lowly shepherd near Bethlehem. When God gave David tremendous military successes, Saul became jealous and wanted to permanently eliminate David either by his own hand or that of Israel's enemies, the Philistines. Saul watched David's military successes pile up. He witnessed the dancing and heard the songs praising David. Even Jonathan, Saul's own son and heir to the throne, loved David. Saul had endured the accolades the people lauded upon David until it was too much for him. David's description in verse 17 reveals how desperate his situation was as this king brought to bear everything he had at his disposal to kill David (1 Sam. 17-31). Just as Egypt was vastly more powerful than Israel in Moses's day, so Saul was much more powerful than David.

***All the enemy's best weapons and strategies  
put together are no match for God.***

## VERSES 18-19

When kings in the ancient Near East waged war, they relied on several things: the size of their armies, the training and discipline of their soldiers, strong allies, the best weapons, having the high ground, impenetrable strongholds, maneuverability and speed, and the right strategy. However, when Saul brought everything he had at his disposal to attack David and bring about David's calamity, it was not enough to defeat David because the Lord was David's **support**. All the enemy's best weapons and strategies put together are no match for God.

The language here is reminiscent of Israel's exodus out of Egypt. When the Israelites reached the Red Sea, they were hemmed in on every side with apparently no way of escape from Pharaoh and his army who were pursuing them. Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the LORD's salvation that he will accomplish for you today . . . the LORD will fight for you" (Ex. 14:13-14). When their enemies were annihilated, the Israelites were able to move freely without fear to Mount Sinai. First Samuel 24 relates how David was forced to hide in caves when Saul pursued him. When David exclaimed that the Lord **brought me out to a spacious place**, it means David was finally able

to move about freely without the threat of the enemies that had been pursuing him.

Why did God do this for David? Though David's enemies hated him, the Lord saved him because He **delighted** in him. It is as Paul wrote in Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who is against us?" Or put another way, "If God is for us, everyone else might as well be."



**What do these verses reveal about God?**

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***If God is for us, everyone else might as well be.***

### **FAITHFULNESS REWARDED (PS. 18:20-24)**

<sup>20</sup> **The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; he repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands.** <sup>21</sup> **For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not turned from my God to wickedness.** <sup>22</sup> **Indeed, I let all his ordinances guide me and have not disregarded his statutes.** <sup>23</sup> **I was blameless toward him and kept myself from my iniquity.** <sup>24</sup> **So the LORD repaid me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.**

#### **VERSE 20**

Verses 20-24 are written in a poetic, chiasmic structure. This means that verse 20 corresponds to verse 24, and verse 21 corresponds to verse 23. This structure is meant to draw attention to the center. Verse 22 is in the center and is the main focus of emphasis as it contains the reason David could proclaim what he did in the other verses:

Verse 20 – David's righteousness and cleanness of hands

Verse 21 – David has kept the ways of the LORD

Verse 22 – God's Word is David's guide in life

Verse 23 – David has kept himself from iniquity

Verse 24 – David's righteousness and cleanness of hands

In these verses, it may appear that David was arrogantly boasting about having attained moral and spiritual perfection. After all, the phrase ***cleanness of my hands*** is a poetic way of expressing

innocence (Ps. 26:6). But David was not claiming that he was perfect. He meant that he was like the man described in Psalm 1 who rejected the way of the wicked. His “delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2). This is the way of those who are righteous, and Psalm 1:6 indicates God continually pays attention to them. Therefore, it is based on this truth about the Lord that David exclaimed, ***the LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; he repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands.*** David had what Peter identified in 1 Peter 3:21 as the “pledge of a good conscience toward God.”

With these things in mind, David began this section stating that the Lord had rewarded and repaid him according to his faithful obedience. David had learned what the writer of Hebrews later affirmed: God “rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

## **God “rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6).**

### **VERSES 21-24**

Verses 21-24 communicate what it means to say one’s single-hearted, daily devotion is to live in faithful obedience to God and His Word.

In verse 21, David declared, ***I have kept the ways of the LORD.***

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 clarifies what this means: “to fear the LORD your God by walking in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. . . . Keep the LORD’s commands and statutes.” Also, by saying, *I have kept*, David was saying that instead of turning away from God to a life of ***wickedness***, living according to God’s Word was an ongoing commitment.

●**Ordinances** and ●**statutes** in verse 22 are synonyms to “the ways of the LORD” in verse 21. They are designations for God’s Word. Therefore, in verse 22 David was stating that he looked to the Lord’s instruction to guide him in life. He reiterated the same idea in verse 23 that he stated in verse 21, declaring that he had lived his life blamelessly and kept himself from iniquity. That is, no one could accuse him of living a lifestyle that was contrary to God’s Word (see Ps. 119:9,105).

Finally, David concluded this section in the same way he began in verse 20. David experienced God’s salvation from his enemies because he had devoted himself to living for God. David was an example of the truth of Proverbs 11:8, which states: “The righteous one is rescued from trouble.”



What steps of faithfulness to God do you need to take today?

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## HOPE GIVEN (PS. 18:25-29)

<sup>25</sup> With the faithful you prove yourself faithful, with the blameless you prove yourself blameless, <sup>26</sup> with the pure you prove yourself pure, but with the crooked you prove yourself shrewd. <sup>27</sup> For you rescue an oppressed people, but you humble those with haughty eyes. <sup>28</sup> LORD, you light my lamp; my God illuminates my darkness. <sup>29</sup> With you I can attack a barricade, and with my God I can leap over a wall.

### VERSES 25-27

Up to this point, David had been stating what God had done. In verses 25-29, he turned his attention directly to God and addressed Him. David stated that the Lord proves Himself to be faithful with the faithful. The root word of *faithful* in Hebrew is connected to the word used to describe God's loyal loving-kindness to His covenant people, Israel. The Lord is faithful to His covenant, which means He is loyal to those who belong to Him. What David described here is at the heart of Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

What's more, God is *blameless* and *pure*. God not only knows what is right but always does what is right because He is entirely righteous. All of this is to say the Lord tenderly and perfectly rescues and cares for His children as they are oppressed by their enemies—the world, the devil, the flesh, and death.

***God not only knows what is right  
but always does what is right  
because He is entirely righteous.***


However, God deals with the *crooked* or perverse in kind by twisting their wickedness to come back upon their own heads. God helps the humble because, in their humility, they are depending on Him. Those with *haughty eyes* are those who pridefully trust in themselves and reject the Lord. They are humbled when they realize they cannot save themselves.



**VERSES 28-29**

**LORD, you light my lamp.** David learned that when believers are contending with their enemies and are walking through the dark times in their lives, it is God who lightens the darkness and gives them hope. What a difference it made when God illuminated David’s dark thoughts of defeat and hopelessness expressed in other psalms.

David was emboldened to take the offensive because God’s light gave him a clear perspective and guidance. With God’s leadership, David could confidently overcome any barrier the enemy put before him. This is reminiscent of what David wrote in Psalm 27:1, “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom should I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—whom should I dread?”

 **How have you seen God’s faithfulness expressed in your life recently?**

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**BIBLE SKILL:** *Read, reflect on, and react emotionally to a Bible verse.*

Focus on Psalm 18:16. Read the verse aloud several times. Each time, emphasize different words or phrases as you read. For example, in one reading emphasize the word “he” each time it appears. Then read the verse again, emphasizing all the action words. Take note of your thoughts. How does the verse move you emotionally? What feelings were evoked by the different words and phrases as you emphasized them? How can you turn this verse into a prayer?

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# APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers can call upon God in times of adversity.
  - + God rewards those who faithfully follow Him.
  - + Believers can trust God to be faithful to them.
- With your Bible study group, share an experience when you called on God in a time of adversity, and He helped you. Why do we sometimes neglect praising the Lord?

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- Make a list of reasons the Lord is worthy of your praise. Spend time in prayer, asking the Lord to increase both your faith in Him and faithfulness to Him.

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- Memorize Psalm 18:3.

## Prayer Needs

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