

# Nature and Character of God

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What Is God Like?

September 01, 2019

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## I. The nature and character of God as seen in **Psalm 18:1-2**

### A. Today, we will look at the nature and character of God as seen in **Psalm 18:1-2**.

1. This psalm was written by David, who was both a male and a warrior. These two facts are helpful for understanding what David is talking about as he describes what God is like and who God is to him.
2. Therefore, if you can visualize a battle setting as we read these two verses, you will be able to see more clearly how God gives you the overpowering advantage in the struggles and battles of life – just like God gave David the advantage over Goliath.
3. And to give you a clear picture of this truth, I want to read an abbreviated version of David's description of the advantage God gave him in facing Goliath.
4. **1 Samuel 17:45-47**, "David said to [Goliath], 'You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. [46] This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, [47] and that all [who are gathered here] may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands.'"

### B. With the things I've just said in mind, listen as I read **Psalm 18:1-2**, "I love You, O LORD, my **strength**. The LORD is my **rock** and my **fortress** and my **deliverer**, my **God**, my **rock**, in whom I take refuge; my **shield** and the **horn** of my salvation, my **stronghold**."

### C. Pray

## II. God strengthens us for battle and secures us against defeat.

### A. **The LORD is my strength:**

1. The first thing David states about the advantage God gives him in the face of life's struggles and battles is that **the Lord is his strength**. Notice, David does not say the Lord strengthens him or that the Lord gives him strength, he says the Lord **IS** his strength.

2. Now it is true, God does strengthen us, and He tells us so in **Isaiah 41:10**, “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. **I will strengthen you**, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”
  - a. Paul affirms this truth when he says in **Philippians 4:13**, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”
  - b. And in **Ephesians 3:14-19**, Paul affirms this truth again in a prayer for the Ephesian Christians where he **asks God to strengthen them** with power through the Holy Spirit in their inner being.
  - c. So yes, God does strengthen us, and we are wise to look to God and even ask Him to strengthen us so that by His strength we can be victorious when faced with temptations, struggles, trials, sufferings, and the daily battles of life.
3. However, in **Psalms 18:1**, David says **the Lord is his strength** – which means something different than the Lord strengthening us or giving us strength. And it is not that these two are so far apart that they cannot be connected. But there is a difference.
  - a. When we say God is our strength, we are speaking of who God is. When we say God strengthens us or gives us strength, we are speaking of what God does.
  - b. What makes this difference of special interest in **Psalms 18:1-2** is that from start to finish, David is describing who the Lord is, not what He does. Or in other words, David is describing God’s nature and character. Of course, in seeing who God is we get an idea or glimpse of what He does.
4. So what does it mean that God is our strength? It means that God, himself, is our strength, and as we trust in Him and rely on Him, we experience the reality of His strength in our lives.
  - a. For example, Paul writes about God being our strength in **Galatians 5:16**, “But I say, walk by the Spirit (*for He will be your strength*), and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”
  - b. In his second letter, Peter begins by speaking of God giving us strength and ends up inferring that this results in God being our strength. Listen as I read **2 Peter 1:2-4**, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; [3] seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these He has granted to us His precious

and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become **partakers of the divine nature** (*which is when God is fully your strength*) having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

5. However, like the wind, you cannot see the strength of God, but you can see and feel the effects of its presence in you.
  - a. And like education, even though you must attend class, listen, take notes, study, prepare for exams, and apply what you are learning, you need a teacher who knows what to teach.
  - b. Paul affirms this when he says that you are to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (**Philippians 2:12-13**).
6. What I hope you can see is that it is God’s nature and character to bring us to that place where we are partakers of His nature, and to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to His power that works within us. And so I encourage you to make God your strength even as you ask Him for strength and do what you must do to make proper use of the strength He gives.

## B. The LORD is my rock

1. As you can see, in our English translation of the Bible, the word “rock” appears twice. However, in the Hebrew and in the Greek Old Testaments, the first word for rock is different from the second word.
2. In this first statement about the Lord being our rock, the Hebrew word speaks of a steep, rugged rock or a rough, jagged cliff that is exceedingly hard to climb, and especially so with battle gear and while facing resistance from above.
3. Therefore, to be on top of this rock or cliff is to be in a position that discourages attackers from even attempting to reach you. And should an attacker make their way up the steep, rugged side, being on top puts you in such a superior position that the only way you could lose would be through carelessness or giving up.
4. It is God’s nature and character to protect us from the evil one, and from the world, and from our own sinful and selfish desires. When we depend on Him for protection, we become like the soldier who is standing on top of a steep, rugged rock or a rough, jagged cliff looking down on an enemy who realizes the difficulty of coming up and overpowering you.

### **C. The LORD is my fortress**

1. A fortress is a fortified structure that makes it so difficult for the enemy to penetrate that even if he tries, he is not likely to succeed.
2. Of course, you can open the door and let the enemy in, but barring that or some other foolish behavior on your part, to be in your fortress is to be safe and secure from enemy attack.
3. There was a Mogul fortress in India that was invincible. Because the food supplies came from the surrounding farmers and town, an enemy figured out how to bribe the food suppliers into filling the bags of grain with mostly sand and just a little grain.
  - a. Due to carelessness or laziness on the part of the fortress, a years worth of diluted supplies were now stored in the fortress, after which the enemy surrounded the fortress so that no one could get in or out.
  - b. The fortress remained invincible for about a year until those still alive within the fortress gave up, hoping to be fed by the enemy rather than killed.
4. My point is that God, by His nature, is an invincible fortress. Any defeat by the enemy is not due to God's failure to protect us, but our failure to be vigilant, or our failure to remain within the fortress.

### **D. The LORD is my deliverer**

1. A deliverer is one who sets us free when we are caught in a trap or held as a prisoner. A deliverer is also one who provides a way of escape when we are about to be trapped or taken prisoner.
2. So why does the Lord want to be our deliverer? Because it is His nature to want to protect us from an attacking enemy, and from the deceptive snares of the devil, and from the foolishness of the world, and from our own foolishness, and from the imprisonment of such things as bad attitudes, wrong thinking, ungodly fears, selfish desires, and foolish pursuits.
3. An example of God's daily deliverance is found in **1 Corinthians 10:13**, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."

### **E. The LORD is my God**

1. David begins this psalm by saying the Lord is my strength, my rock, me fortress, and my deliverer. Then he says, the Lord is my God.

2. As you may recall from the teaching on God's self-description to Moses in **Exodus 34:6-7**, the title LORD speaks of God's **position of authority**, a position that makes Him the **master** or the **ruler** over all.
  - a. Therefore, to say that the Lord is your God is a profound statement, for it means that the one you serve is the one you worship, and the one you worship is the one you serve.
  - b. Imagine having such high regard for your master that you worship him, and having such high regard for your God that you serve him.
3. Let me ask, is God your only Lord and master? Or are you trying to serve two masters? Do you eagerly worship God when He is acting as your master, and do you cheerfully serve God when He is acting as your loving Father?
  - a. The Bible teaches us that such things as money, sexual immorality, power, and fame are vigorously competing with God for supremacy in our lives and lordship over our lives.
  - b. However, none of those things has the right nature or character to be a good, just, and loving Lord. But God does! In fact, it is His nature and character to want to be our Lord – **for our sakes** – that is, so we can live an abundant life instead of being mired in death.

**F. The LORD is my rock, in whom I take refuge;**

1. This time, the Hebrew word for rock speaks of an indentation or crevice in a rock or in the rocks in which we can safely hide from our enemy or be sheltered from a storm. This is why the words, "In whom I take refuge" follow the words, "the Lord is my rock."
2. God is a place of rest, and a refuge from the storm, and a hiding place from what threatens us.
  - a. In relation to God being a place of rest, Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (**Matthew 11:28-29**). And David wrote in **Psalms 4:8**, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety."
  - b. Regarding God being our refuge from the storm, we read in **Psalms 46:1-3**, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. [2] Therefore we will not fear, though the earth

should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; [3] though its waters roar and foam, and though the mountains quake.”

- c. And in relation to God being a hiding place, David wrote, “You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance” (**Psalms 32:7**).
3. It is God’s nature and character to be your place of rest, your refuge from the storm, and your hiding place. If you trust Him to be this to you, you will find He is all this and more.

#### G. **The LORD is my shield**

1. A shield is a piece of protective armor that goes before you for the purpose of protecting your body from the enemy’s weapons of war.
2. So why do you need a shield? Well, if your enemy kills you, you won’t be able to rise and fight for another day. And if your enemy sufficiently wounds you, you won’t be fighting for many days to come.
3. Therefore, it is vital to protect your body from harm so you can continue fighting against the enemy.
4. David shows the necessity of the Lord being our shield in **Psalms 3:1-3**, “O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. [2] Many are saying of my soul, ‘There is no deliverance for him in God.’ [3] But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.”
5. And Paul affirms the worth of a shield when he exhorts us to take up the shield of faith, that is, faith in God, for it is our faith in God that acts as our shield in defending ourselves against the flaming arrows of the evil one (**Ephesians 6:16**).

#### H. **The LORD is the horn of my salvation**

1. The horn is a protruding weapon on the head of an animal with which he can either attack or defend himself against attack.
2. It is in this sense that the Lord, who is our horn of salvation, is out in front, either leading the attack or defending us when we are under attack. And yes, we are also fighting, but God is out front, fighting for us and with us.
3. We see the truth of this in God’s own words to Israel concerning driving out the sinful nations from the Promised Land. He said, “The LORD your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish. [21] You shall not

dread them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. [22] The LORD your God **will clear away** these nations before you ... He **will deliver them before you**, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. [24] He will deliver their kings into your hand....” (**Deuteronomy 7:20-24**).

4. In this same way, the Lord is our horn of salvation, going before us in fighting off the attacks of the devil, the world, and our flesh, and in so doing, ensuring our victory.

### I. **The LORD is my stronghold.**

1. Think of a stronghold as a hidden, exceedingly secure, well-stocked place within the walls of your fortress to which you can go should your fortress be overrun by the enemy.
2. In other words, should the **rock**, the **fortress**, the **deliverer**, the **crevice**, the **shield**, and the **horn** fail to keep the enemy out, you can go to the Lord, your **stronghold**, and be completely safe.
3. Therefore, we read in **Psalm 33:16-19**, “The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not delivered by great strength. [17] A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. [18] Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, [19] to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.
4. This is our God!

### III. Conclusion

- A. The reality is, there is no security apart from God. In fact, the only true, dependable, and lasting security is God, himself. And we gain this security by a faith in God that results in loving and obeying God.
- B. This is why Solomon said, “The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright” (**Proverbs 10:29**).
- C. And may your faith in God be such that you make Him, himself, your **strength**, your **rock**, your **fortress**, your **deliverer**, your **God**, your **rock** in whom you take refuge; your **shield**, the **horn** of your salvation, and your **stronghold**.”