

Psalms 21:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

Analysis

Human schemes against God are futile—'they are not able to perform.' This verse expresses the Reformed doctrine of divine sovereignty: God's purposes cannot be thwarted by creature rebellion. The wicked 'imagine' evil, but God ordains all things according to His will (Prov. 19:21). Their inability demonstrates human impotence against divine omnipotence, a truth that both warns rebels and comforts believers.

Historical Context

Throughout biblical history, conspiracies against God's anointed failed—Saul's pursuit of David, Absalom's rebellion, plots against Jesus. This verse became a testimony to God's faithfulness in protecting His chosen ones despite human opposition.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God's sovereignty over all circumstances provide comfort in times of opposition?
2. What modern attempts to 'perform evil' against God's purposes have you witnessed fail?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	נָטוּ	עַל יָדְךָ	הָרָע	תִּשְׁבּוּ
H3588	For they intended	H5921	evil	against thee they imagined
	H5186		H7451	H2803
הָזֶמָּה	בִּלְ	יִוָּכְלוּ:		
a mischievous device	H1077	which they are not able		
H4209		H3201		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 10:2 (Evil): The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

Psalms 2:1 (Parallel theme): Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Matthew 2:16 (Parallel theme): Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Psalms 31:13 (Parallel theme): For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

Matthew 2:8 (Parallel theme): And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Psalms 83:4 (Parallel theme): They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

Psalms 35:20 (Parallel theme): For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.

Matthew 21:46 (Parallel theme): But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

Ezekiel 11:2 (Evil): Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city: