

Psalm 83:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

Analysis

They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. The enemy conspiracy involves cunning strategy, not merely brute force. Ya'arimu sod (יערימו סוד, "they have taken crafty counsel") uses aram (עָרָם), meaning to be shrewd, cunning, or subtle—the same word describing the serpent in Genesis 3:1. This is calculated, deceptive strategy designed to destroy through subtlety what cannot be defeated directly.

Thy hidden ones (tsefuneikha, אֲפָתִיךְ is remarkable terminology. The verb tsafan (אָפַתָּנָה) means to hide, treasure up, store securely. God's people are His treasured possession, hidden and protected in Him. Isaiah 49:2 uses similar language: "in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." Colossians 3:3 echoes this: "your life is hid with Christ in God." Though enemies see only vulnerable Israel, God sees His precious, protected treasure. The covenant people's security doesn't rest in military might but in being hidden in God's sheltering presence.

The parallelism between "thy people" (ammekha, עֲמָךְ) and "thy hidden ones" emphasizes both corporate identity and individual preciousness. Believers are simultaneously part of God's people collectively and individually treasured by Him. Enemies may conspire with crafty counsel, but they cannot penetrate God's protection of those hidden in Him. Their schemes, though clever, will fail because they attack what God Himself guards.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare involved not just military battles but political intrigue, deception, alliance-building, and strategic plotting. Sun Tzu's principle "all warfare is based on deception" was understood millennia before he wrote it. Enemies of Israel often used cunning rather than direct assault: Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel (Numbers 22-24); Canaanites lured Israel into idolatry (Numbers 25:1-3); Haman plotted systematic genocide (Esther 3-4). The psalm's warning about "crafty counsel" reflects this reality. Modern spiritual warfare similarly involves subtle deception (2 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 6:11) more than overt persecution. The church faces cultural seduction, doctrinal compromise, and strategic marginalization—"crafty counsel" designed to neutralize Christian witness without martyring believers.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that believers are God's "hidden ones," and how does this truth provide security in times of opposition?
2. How can you discern between direct opposition and "crafty counsel" (subtle strategies) designed to undermine your faith or the church's witness?
3. In what ways does modern culture employ cunning strategy against Christian truth rather than direct confrontation?

Interlinear Text

עַל	עַמְּךָ	יָצְרָרִים	סְדִּיד	עַל
H5921	against thy people	They have taken crafty	counsel	and consulted
	H5971	H6191	H5475	H3289

אֶפְרַיִם:

against thy hidden ones

H6845

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 27:5 (Parallel theme): For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

Psalms 64:2 (Parallel theme): Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:

Psalms 31:20 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Psalms 91:1 (Parallel theme): He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalms 56:6 (Parallel theme): They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

Psalms 10:9 (Parallel theme): He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

1 Samuel 13:19 (Parallel theme): Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: