

# Zephaniah 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

## Analysis

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**I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people**—God's sovereign election preserves a remnant characterized by humble dependence. The Hebrew *am ani va-dal* (עַם עֲנֵי וְדַל) describes those who are "afflicted and poor," not merely economically disadvantaged but spiritually broken and dependent. The term *ani* (עֲנֵי) denotes humble, meek, afflicted—those who recognize their spiritual poverty before God (cf. Isaiah 66:2). *Dal* (דַל) means poor, weak, helpless—completely dependent on God's provision rather than self-sufficiency.

**They shall trust in the name of the LORD** (ve-chasu be-shem Yahweh, וְחִסּוּ בְשֵׁם יְהוָה)—the verb *chasah* (חָסַח) means to seek refuge, take shelter, trust completely. This isn't casual confidence but desperate seeking of protection, like fleeing to a fortress. "The name of the LORD" represents His revealed character, covenant promises, and saving power. The remnant's identity centers not on ethnic privilege, ritual observance, or self-righteousness but on radical trust in Yahweh alone.

This verse establishes a theology of the remnant foundational to redemptive history. God preserves not the proud, self-sufficient elite but the humble poor who cast themselves entirely on His mercy. Jesus proclaimed, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3), echoing Zephaniah's remnant theology. Paul declares God chose the "weak" and "foolish" to shame the strong and wise (1 Corinthians 1:27-29), ensuring salvation rests on grace alone,

not human merit. The afflicted remnant prefigures the church—those who abandon self-trust to find refuge in Christ alone.

## Historical Context

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Zephaniah 3:12 sits within the restoration promise (3:9-20) following severe judgment oracles. After announcing Jerusalem's destruction and universal judgment (chapters 1-2), the prophet shifts to hope: God will purify a remnant, remove their enemies, and dwell among them. This "afflicted and poor people" would emerge from the Babylonian exile beginning in 586 BC. When Persia defeated Babylon and allowed Jewish return (538 BC onward), those who returned were indeed afflicted and poor—broken by exile, stripped of national glory, dependent entirely on God's mercy for survival and restoration.

Post-exilic prophets like Haggai and Zechariah ministered to this humble remnant, calling them to rebuild the temple despite opposition and economic hardship. The community that returned was vastly diminished from Solomon's golden age—no king, limited territory, foreign domination, modest resources. Yet these "afflicted and poor" formed the faithful line through which Messiah would come. Their poverty and weakness forced dependence on covenant promises rather than national strength, preparing the way for the ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

The New Testament church embodies this remnant principle. Early believers were largely drawn from society's poor and marginalized (1 Corinthians 1:26-28, James 2:5). Throughout history, genuine spiritual vitality often emerges among those stripped of worldly power and privilege. The "afflicted and poor" who trust in the LORD's name become the inheritors of His kingdom—a reversal of worldly values that displays God's grace and glory.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does recognizing yourself as "afflicted and poor" spiritually transform your relationship with God and reliance on His grace?
2. In what ways might material prosperity, social status, or religious privilege hinder the radical trust in God's name that characterizes the remnant?
3. How does this verse challenge the modern prosperity gospel or assumptions that God's blessing manifests primarily through wealth, power, and worldly success?

## Interlinear Text

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תְּלַזֵּן בְּקָרְבָּן עַמְּךָ צְבָא וְשָׁאָרָת  
I will also leave in the midst people of thee an afflicted and poor

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וְיַחֲזִיקֵה בְּשֵׁם יְהָוָה  
and they shall trust in the name of the LORD

H2620 H8034 H3068

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 14:32** (Faith): What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

**Nahum 1:7** (Faith): The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

**Isaiah 50:10** (Faith): Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

**Matthew 5:3** (Parallel theme): Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**James 2:5 (Faith):** Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

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