

**Wenstrom Bible Ministries**  
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**Zephaniah: Zephaniah 2:3d-The Remnant of Faithful Jewish Believers Must  
Remain Faithful to be Protected from God's Wrath**

**Lesson # 40**

**Zephaniah 2:3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger. (NASB95)**

“Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger” is composed of the following: (1) adverb *’ûlay* (אולי), “perhaps” (2) second person masculine plural niphil passive imperfect form of the verb *sātar* (סָתַר), “you will be hidden” (3) preposition *b* (בְּ), “in” (4) masculine singular construct form of the noun *yôm* (יוֹם), “the day of” (8) masculine singular construct form of the noun *’ap* (אַף), “anger” (9) masculine singular proper noun *yhwh* (יהוה), “the Lord's.”

The adverb *’ûlay* is a marker of uncertainty but with an expectancy that something positive will take place and is used to express the possibility or probability of a condition.

Zephaniah's use of the adverb *’ûlay* is expressing the uncertainty that these faithful Jewish believers will remain faithful.

It is also expressing his respect for the freedom of God's sovereignty.

The verb *sātar* is in the niphil stem and means “to be hidden, to be sheltered, to be protected” since it pertains to not being able to be known and has an associative meaning of protection and safety.

Here the word speaks of safety and protection from the exercise of God's righteous indignation.

The second person masculine plural form of this verb means “all of you” and is referring to faithful Jewish believers whether they are living in the seventh century B.C. or during Daniel's seventieth week.

It is used in a distributive sense meaning “every one of you” expressing the idea of no exceptions.

Therefore, this verb speaks of each of these faithful Jewish believers being protected from the exercise of God’s righteous indignation.

**Zephaniah 2:3 Continue making it your habit of diligently seeking after the Lord’s will each and every one of you humble people of the land who are fulfilling His law. Each and every one of you continue making it your habit of seeking after righteousness. Each and every one of continue making it your habit of seeking after humility. Perhaps every one of you will be protected during the period characterized by the Lord’s legitimate anger. (My translation)**

Zephaniah 2:3 closes with the statement “**Perhaps every one of you will be protected during the period characterized by the Lord’s legitimate anger.**”

It is expressing the possibility that faithful Jewish believers will avoid experiencing the Lord’s righteous indignation.

Of course, the Lord would never punish these faithful believers because of the sins of unrepentant sinners.

In other words, He would never punish the innocent for the sins of the guilty.

However, these faithful believers will only be spared if they continue to remain faithful.

They too will be punished if they go into apostasy.

So this statement is expressing the uncertainty as to whether or not these faithful believers will remain faithful.

It is holding out the possibility that they might not remain faithful.

Thus, Zephaniah is not expressing his uncertainty as to whether nor not these faithful Jewish believers would escape God’s wrath.

Rather, he is showing humble respect for God and expressing the uncertainty as to whether or not these faithful believers will remain faithful.

This statement does not express his uncertainty with regards to a moody tyrant but rather it expresses that he has a humble attitude and is consciously aware of the sovereign freedom of God.

This statement expresses Zephaniah's humble attitude toward God and that he is respecting God's freedom to make decisions as He pleases.

It is expressing the fact that even though there are faithful Jewish believers, he will not presume on God's mercy and grace as if it were something under his control rather than God's.

He will not presume that these faithful Jewish believers will remain faithful.

He knows God will not punish faithful believers because of the sins of those who were unrepentant sinners.

So this statement would indicate that the prophet is appealing to God's sovereign grace and mercy to be exercised towards these faithful Jewish believers.

He is also expressing the uncertainty that these faithful believers will remain faithful.

Though many died in the Babylonian invasions, others were spared and some were exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 24:14–16). God sheltered or protected His remnant.<sup>1</sup>

In a near sense, this “**period characterized by the Lord's legitimate anger**” refers to the period of time when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Judah and her neighbors during the period between 605-587 B.C. and in a far sense, it is referring to the last three and a half years of the seventieth week of Daniel.

“**The Lord's legitimate anger**” is another reference to God's righteous indignation or in other words, His legitimate anger towards sin and unrepentant sinners among the Jewish people.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah, J. D. (1985). Zephaniah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1529). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

God's righteous indignation or wrath is His legitimate anger towards evil and sin since both are contrary to His holiness or perfect character and nature.

In fact, God's righteous indignation expresses His holiness, which pertains to the absolute perfection of God's character.

His holiness is expressing the purity of His character or moral perfection and excellence and means that God can have nothing to do with sin or sinners.

He is totally separate from sin and sinners unless a way can be found to constitute them holy and that way has been provided based upon the merits of the impeccable Person and Finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

The presence of evil, sin and injustice is totally absent in the character of God, thus God does not tolerate evil or sin because it is contrary to His character, i.e. His inherent moral qualities, ethical standards and principles.

The only way to avoid God's righteous indignation is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:36).

These faithful Jewish believers described in Zephaniah 2:3 as humble and who were commanded by Zephaniah to continue making it their habit of seeking righteousness and humility constituted the remnant in Judah in the seventh century B.C. and will constitute the one living during the seventieth week of Daniel.

Fruchtenbaum writes "The doctrine of the remnant means that, within the Jewish nation as a whole, there are always some who believe and all those who believe among Israel comprise the Remnant of Israel. The remnant at any point of history may be large or small but there is never a time when it is non-existent. Only believers comprise the remnant, but not all believers are part of the remnant for the remnant is a Jewish remnant and is, therefore, comprised of Jewish believers. Furthermore, the remnant is always part of the nation as a whole and not detached from the nation as a separate entity. The remnant is distinct, but distinct within the nation."<sup>2</sup>

In the Old Testament, in relation to the nation of Israel, a "remnant" referred to a small percentage of the population of the nation of Israel who survived divine judgment in the form of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and deportations.

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<sup>2</sup> Fruchtenbaum, A. G. (1994). *Israelology: the missing link in systematic theology* (Rev. ed., p. 601). Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries.

The concept has its roots in Deuteronomy 4:27-31; 28:62-68; 30:1-10.

In these passages, Moses warns Israel that they would be dispersed throughout the nations for their disobedience but would be brought back to the land based upon God's grace and covenantal faithfulness.

The prophets subsequent to Moses continued this doctrine when teaching the nation of Israel during the time each lived.

There was a remnant in Judah during the days of King Hezekiah when Sennacherib invaded Israel and threatened to destroy Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13-2 Kings 19:37).

There was a remnant mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 40:11, 15; 41:10, 16; 42:2, 15, 19; 43:5; 44:7, 12, 14, 28; 44:28; 47:4, 5; 50:20).

In Jeremiah 42:2 and 50:20 the remnant refers to those Israelites returning from the Babylonian captivity and he speaks of a remnant who will experience the millennial reign of Christ (Jeremiah 23:3; 31:7).

Zechariah also speaks of a remnant of Israelites during the millennial reign of Christ (Zechariah 8:6, 11, 12).

The prophet Micah also speaks of a future remnant of Israelites during the millennium (Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18) and so does Zephaniah (2:7, 9, 3:13).

The remnant doctrine appears in the writings of Isaiah (Isaiah 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 15:9; 16:14; 17:3; 28:5; 37:4, 31, 32; 46:3) and is used in Nehemiah (1:3) and in the writings of Ezra of the returning Israelites from Babylon (Ezra 9:8, 13, 14, 15).

Haggai speaks of this remnant that returned from Babylon (1:12, 14; 2:2).

Paul mentions this remnant doctrine in Romans 9:6 and then develops it further in Romans 9:27-29.

The concept of the remnant appears in Romans 11:5, where it refers to the "remnant" of believers in Israel in Paul's day, in the first century.