

In the Shadow of the Most High

by Stu Fuhlendorf

Psalm 91:1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

I've been in a relationship with Jesus for over fifteen years now, and one of the most important things I've learned is how to dwell — or, as the Merriam-Webster puts it, to be a “permanent resident” — in the secret place of the Most High. There are a lot of reasons why God is called the Most High. Perhaps most obviously, that label means He is the highest authority over all creation because everything comes from Him.

Additionally, when I envision God as the Most High, I'm reminded of how God has made me feel higher than any drug I've ever taken, or alcohol I've ever drank. So many times in the last fifteen years God has completely intoxicated me with His love.

It's not me being emotional or weird, either. Those experiences are actually God pouring His love into me, responding to my desire to be in a real relationship with Him. This desire comes straight from His grace and mercy.

To be in a healthy relationship with another person, you have to experience that person by giving and receiving love; otherwise, it's not a real relationship. It's the same thing in a relationship with God – The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God has given me a heart to experience Him and not some fake religion or fake substance. I'm constantly pursuing a real relationship with the One who loved me and gave Himself to save me from my total depravity.

The Holy Spirit is poured out like wine on those who give up their desires of the world and crave a real relationship with God.

Matthew 9:17 says that when we believe in Jesus, the Spirit of God is poured into us like new wine into new wineskins (the containers they carried their drinks in back in the day.) This “wine” as the Holy Spirit is figuratively called, is better than any drug or booze – or anything else in creation, for that matter. It's the highest high any person can experience on earth. We are made to worship – and when the Spirit of God is poured into us like new wine it is the ultimate high.

Unfortunately, it's hard for people to actually let go of themselves and the world enough to experience God in this way. Worse yet, many people don't believe that they can experience God so intimately.

What I feel that God is saying to us with **Psalm 91:1** is this: all people who live as permanent residents in the secret place of their mind (thoughts) and heart (affections) with God will be protected and intoxicated with God's love, remaining stable in a state of rest under the “shadow of the Almighty.”

The Bible clearly states that Christ is in us and we are seated with Him in heavenly realms. As we tap into this reality by being in God's Word, in prayer, and worshiping Him we are experiencing God's breathtaking gift inside of us. Believe me, once this becomes real to you, no bad news that comes into your life will be able to move you from a foundation built on the Rock of Ages.

Many of the difficult experiences I've had as a Christian came with a major choice I was forced to make between The World and The Word. In those experiences, my confusion would sometimes be so great that I wouldn't know what direction to take. Those were the best times for me to "live as a permanent resident in the secret place" of my heart, trusting God no matter what things look like around me. This comfort came directly from the Holy Spirit as I read and prayed on what God was saying to me through His Word.

I've always pictured the "shadow of the Almighty" as a gigantic tree protecting me from the thunderous August storm clouds on the Colorado high plains. In my times of need, I feel I'm under that huge tree, waiting for my mental and emotional storms to pass; and when they pass, the sun shines again, giving me clarity to make the decisions that I need to make.

We can ALL learn to walk in such a close relationship with God – so that no difficulty or tragedy will be able to move us from our trust in Him: trust that He'll turn everything around for good for those who love Him (**Romans 8:28**).

It doesn't matter what we're experiencing: broken relationships, loss of a house or car, illness or death in the family, loss of a job. Anything that comes our way will be like thunderous storm clouds opening up to hurl their rain and hailstones down. But what is comforting is those hailstorms don't knock us out because we are protected by the gigantic tree that hovers over us in protection.

If you don't feel this strong in your relationship with God right now, I urge you to invest daily personal time with Him. That kind of daily relational work has helped me look at life's difficulties as exercise equipment where regular use will build up my spiritual muscles of faith in the One who watches over us all.

God will draw near as you draw near to Him in your spiritual disciplines. The Bible tells us that's true as His Saints (**James 4:8**). Don't worry: life's troubles can be viewed as a school of God's Spirit teaching you awesome things that you never knew. Relax, be at peace that God's Hand is in the blessings – and the mess. Be at peace and learn.