

# Psalm 91:1-2

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-91/psalm-911-2/>

*The Lord is the Living God of proven protection and sure strength upon whom the faithful may fully lean.*

The psalm begins, *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High*. Initially presenting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person point of view, the psalmist fashions a warm, inviting metaphor casting the very real possibility that people can continuously maintain an intimate relationship with God. The pronoun “he” is used as a universalizing 3<sup>rd</sup> person expression. Its application is not limited by gender, but indicates the all-encompassing reach of the Lord’s affections and care for all His people (Galatians 3:28).

The verb *dwells* in the phrase *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High* (Hebrew, “yashab”) sets a condition that presupposes a long-term situation, unchanging in its durable character. Other English terms associated with the original Hebrew verb are: sit, remain, live. Thus, *dwells* invokes a sense of enduring residency; in this case, within a life-long, unyielding relational commitment described now as *the shelter of the Most High*.

One need not limit the noun *shelter* (Hebrew, “cether”) to a structural entity. While the word indeed can suggest construction of a physical nature, here it leans more toward a meaning akin to circumstances of secrecy, safe keeping, or protection. When dwelling in the *shelter* of God’s providence, faithful believers purposefully invest their trust in the One who promises to be the steward of their ultimate good in all things. The New Testament offers a resonant echo of that stance:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”  
(Romans 8:28)

The psalmist’s first mention of God in Psalm 91 is by use of a titular name, *Most High* (Hebrew, “elyown”) who is a *shelter*. In the ancient world beset with innumerable deities to which people were drawn for any number of reasons, the writer of this poetic work early and emphatically establishes an incontrovertible truth. There is no God greater than the one true God of Israel. All other so-called deities are mere fictions, none of which bear comparison to the living Lord of all creation:

“For this reason You are great, O Lord God; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”  
(2 Samuel 7:22)

What begins as a person’s conscious decision taken and sustained with purpose—to *dwells*—results in a specific outcome. The one *who dwells in the shelter of the Most High* consequentially

*will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.* To dwell may be understood as an act of volition; the faithful one who chooses and works to live in relationship with the Lord, trusting in Him. To *abide in the shadow* describes the ramifications resulting from that active life of preferring God: a settledness, a stability, a continued experience of the Lord's providential and eternal care. To be in *the shadow* of something requires being in its close proximity. If we *dwell* in God as our *shelter*, we can abide in His *shadow*. We can trust that God always has our best at heart, despite appearances.

The name *Almighty* (Hebrew, "Shaddai") in the phrase *the shadow of the Almighty* was first ascribed to God in Genesis 17:1. It describes the Lord as the One Who is both all-sufficient and self-sufficient, able to do even what seems impossible. The first strophe of verse 1, *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High*, describes the choice made by one to put their trust in the Lord, the *Most High*. It makes sense to trust the *Most High*; there is no higher authority or power than the *Most High*.

The second strophe of the verse, *Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty*, demonstrates the steadfast, covering commitment of *Almighty* God to those who trust in Him. *The Most High* God of Psalm 91 is the only authentic *God, the Almighty*, with whom all people may unfailingly rely; and, with whom each may enter into a sheltering, life-sustaining and purpose-fulfilling eternal relationship.

It is, however, a choice left up to each person whether they will trust in the *Most High* who is *Almighty*. The original temptation given to humans was to trust in self rather than God (Genesis 3:4-5). Humans have a fundamental choice to make whether to trust that God's ways are for our best, or whether we know what is best apart from God. If we acknowledge that only He is *Most High* (not us) and only He is *Almighty*, then it makes logical sense to trust God to be our *shelter*, and remain in His *shadow*.

Verse 2 is rendered in the 1<sup>st</sup> person. It is an undisguised, bold declaration of faith in and reliance upon the Lord God. It is a confession of complete trust unhampered by doubt or limitation. The psalmist underscores the character of what it means to live under God's care as first described in the opening of the psalm: *I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"*

*The Lord*, translates from "Yahweh" which means "I Am." This is God's most personal name, first revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15. The I Am is the only dependable source of *refuge* (Hebrew, "mahsi"); of authentic comfort and compassionate care as the inevitable storms of life batter body and soul. *Yahweh* is the Living God of proven protection and sure strength upon whom the faithful may fully lean.

He is a *refuge* and an unyielding *fortress* (Hebrew, "matsuwd") against the onslaught of sorrow and loss launched at mortal humanity within a wayward creation. The psalmist makes it personal: Yahweh is **MY** *refuge and MY* *fortress* [emphasis added]. "The Lord," declares the psalmist, "is **MY** *God* and completely worthy of **MY** *trust*" (Hebrew, "batah"). This wholesale trust is warranted since God's providential care and His redeeming love do not fail,

“The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,  
For His compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.”  
(Lamentations 3:22-23)

**Biblical Text**

**<sup>1</sup> He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.**

**<sup>2</sup> I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress,  
My God, in whom I trust!”**