

'The Secret Place of the Most High'

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer explores the concept of the secret place of the Most High as a vital spiritual state of heart that few Christians truly enter into.

Scripture: Psalm 91:1-2, Hebrews 10:19

Topics: "Intimacy With God", "Spiritual Refuge"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the significance of dwelling in 'the secret place of the Most High,' which he describes as a spiritual state of heart rather than a physical location. He explains that this secret place is accessible to all believers and is characterized by faith, love, and trust in God, providing refuge from the pressures and moral incompatibilities of the world. Tozer illustrates the rarity of finding this place, noting that many Christians fail to seek it despite its availability. He encourages believers to pursue this intimate relationship with God, which offers peace and strength amidst life's challenges. Ultimately, Tozer calls for a deeper understanding and commitment to abiding in the presence of God.

Transcript

The Secret Place of the Most High

Pastor and author, A.W. Tozer

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Now, the first verse of Psalm 91. I preached three times last Sunday and twice every other day except one, to what one man called a motley group. They weren't motley, but they were certainly inter-denominational. And sitting on the front row every blessed meeting was an Episcopalian rector. And he shook hands with me over and over, and expressed his appreciation and sense of oneness with the kind of truth that we were trying to bring.

But now, the 91st Psalm, he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. This 91st song is one which, because of its misuse by so many, I have never, I wonder if I could confess this, cared too much for. Probably I shouldn't say there's any passage of Scripture I don't care for. But even you'll admit there are some passages dearer to you than others and some that you don't read, except dutifully, when you're reading through the Bible. And the 91st Psalm was one, among all those golden shining songs, that to me, has been sort of dutiful song, which I read, but

didn't really get too much out of. And I have never preached on it in 28 years that I can recall, though, I probably have referred to texts from it occasionally. But I'll let me correct my fault this morning. And perhaps for the next Sunday or two, and talk from the 91st Psalm.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High. Let's break that down. First, there is the place. Now, place is a location, and it can be and usually is a geographical location. It is also a moral or spiritual or mental location by extension of the word. But let's not forget that it's a real place. The secret place of the Most High is not a poetical phrase only. It is a real place, having an exact location, not vague, nor indefinite. It is so real that we can be in it or we can be out of. We can be nearer to it, or far from it. We can be at any time, approaching it or going further away from it. That's a real place. And yet it is not a physical place.

The secret place of the Most High is not a church. I do not want you ever to become church Christians in the sense that you're building Christians. I don't want you to be tabernacle Christians. We have had an epidemic of tabernacle-ism, and I don't like it. But I've said enough on that, I think in the past, but still, I don't want you to think that you must come to a church in order to be in the secret place of the Most High. This building is not the secret place of the Most High. I was around here when it was built. And anything that I saw being built, couldn't be the secret place of the Most High because Moses wrote about the secret place of the Most High, assuming Moses is the author, and I think everybody does, of this Psalm. And so, anything that Moses wrote about couldn't be this building, because 16 years ago, I saw it being built.

So, it is not a church. It is not even a prayer closet. We say sometimes that I'm glad we testify and glad I came to church today. I'm glad to be able to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Oh no, the church is not the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, neither is the meeting the heavenly place in Christ Jesus. That is a spiritual location, not a physical one. So that not even your prayer closet, however precious your secret times of prayer may be. That's not what the Psalmist meant when he said, he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High. It's not a shrine, and it is not a meeting. It's not a country, not even a holy land. It is not a denomination, and it is not a doctrine.

The secret place of the Most High is the heart of God, the place of faith in God, love for God, confidence in the love of God in Christ, obedient trust in the mercy of God. It is a state of heart, in a state of heart. It is our state of heart in the heart of God. That is the secret place of the Most High. And we may enter it and we may abide in it. And we may be in it or out of it. But the secret place of the Most High is there for us.

Now, it is a secret place. And it is secret, not because it is hard to find, nor because it is hidden or difficult. It is a secret place because there are so few who enter it. It is an open secret, and is secret only because there are so few Christians that ever find or enter into the secret place of the Most High. There are a few hungry, eager people in all the denominations who are seeking the secret place of the Most High and are finding it.

I do not intend to come to you from a week away and tell you about what happened there, though we walked the borderline of revival to the point where they were up into the night hours into four o'clock in the morning, seeking God and getting through to victory. But they were of all denominations, and I find these seekers after God in every denomination. Let me tell you this. I have told two or three here since I've come about one young man who was at the Highland conference. This young man was one of the best-looking young fellows that I have ever seen. Eighteen years old, handsome to the point of being a Caller ad and muscular, muscled up great chest, great arms, and simply good and wholesome to look at down to his

waist. And from there down, was a polio paralytic, completely, and had to be in a wheelchair.

That young man, in his eagerness to get to this place; he comes from a broken home and had no help there, presumably. But in order to get to this place, this young, eager 18-year-old boy, hopelessly paralyzed from the waist down, his shrunken, flimsy legs dragging behind him like fins. This boy hitchhiked 150 miles in a wheelchair to get to that conference. And one day to their astonishment, wheeled himself into the office and said, I want to work so I can stay here. And they said what can you do? He said, I can trim hedges. I can do things. So, they gave him a job. And he pulled himself around, trimming hedges in order that he might be there at the conference. And he was at every meeting, sitting there, listening eagerly.

When I think of that young man, I'm bothered for some of you who have been brought up in Christian homes and have been surrounded with all the nurture and spiritual culture that could be brought to bear on you. And yet, here's a young man from an un-Christian, divided home, hitchhiking in a wheelchair 150 miles to get to that place of God, that place of God.

A little girl whose father had tried to kill her mother, whether she saw it or not, I'm not sure and she had escaped and the neighbors had gotten the police to get away this drunken beast. And this little girl hated her father until she was violent. And they were trying, they were soothing her and trying to teach her and one great big young fella with a daughter about her age used to lead her around. She put her arms around his neck and said, oh, I wish I had a daddy like you. But she was only to have him for two weeks, and then back to that.

Brethren, when I think of how without a chance in the wide world, without anything to encourage them, without anybody apparently to help them at all or even pray for them. Some people touched by a divine stroke, find their way through. And others, it's secret. They don't know where it is. They haven't found it and probably never will. It's as unreal to them as fabled Atlantis, the island that's supposed to have arisen out of the Atlantic Ocean stayed a while and gone back down again, beautiful, but only temporary.

So, this secret place isn't Atlantis to the average person. And they that dwell in it tend to be different I have noticed. They who dwell in this secret place are different. They're peculiar, and they're a little bit careless of this life. And they tend to flock together, though they're lonely. And they know each other without an introduction. I've said this many times, but it's been confirmed, it's good to arrive at a conclusion spiritually, and then, as you move about, find that your conclusion is not being disallowed, but that it's being confirmed and strengthened. And my conclusion that the people of God today are not the mobs and the crowds, but people, the elect, picked out from all of the religious hubbub and united together in a bond of spiritual union. And they know each other. This Episcopalian rector, why he and I had the sweetest, warmest, longest talks together. And he even wants a list of books that he ought to read so he'll get to know God better. I'm going to send it to him.

Well, I am not an Episcopalian. I never could fool around with an altar and a robe, but he does. And yet, there is a hungry heart among the Episcopalians and hungry hearts everywhere; and they know each other without an introduction. They say this, Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith, and they shake hands and look at each other. And after the first prayer, they know they've known each other in Christ long before that.

Then it says, the secret place of the Most High. Now that adjective "most" is there, but the high, since it's supposed to be a noun, usually an adjective, it's God Himself, the Most High. Usually it said, the Most High God, but here He is called the Most High, and so it's God.

Now, the first occurrence of the term is back in the book of Genesis, so far as we know the first time it was used. And Abraham when he heard that Lot was taken captive, armed and his trained servants born in his house, 318, and he divided himself against the enemy, and sent his servants out and smote them and pursued them unto Hobab. And he brought back all the goods and also brought back Lot and his goods and the woman also and the people. And the king of Sodom went out and Melchizedek king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the Most High God. And He blessed Abraham and said, blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, give me the persons and take the goods to thyself. And Abraham said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, but I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet. And I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou should say, I have made Abram rich.

Now, Moses wrote this. And if Moses also wrote the Psalm, you see the spiritual and mental tie in here. The Most High, he was thinking of the Most High God who was Jehovah, possessor of heaven and earth and the meaning of the words to us. We have the disadvantage of knowing too much about it. But there were pagan gods all around Abram and all around Melchizedek and the city of Salem. But here was the one God, the Most High God, the God over all. And here was the Hierarchy of Heaven, the principality, the powers, the angels, the seraphim, and those watchers and holy ones that Daniel spoke about. But above them all was the Most High God throned in life, the Unbeginning One, immortal and all wise and all powerful. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Most High God.

So, this secret place, this spiritual location, this home, this mansion, this abiding place of the heart, is secret only because so few know it, but it's in the heart, the Most High God. And they that dwell in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. And you and I actually don't know what this means, because it's rare that we're caught out in the sun in such unbearable heat that we have to hurry to a place of shade. But in the Bible lands where this was written, the shadow meant the difference between life and death. Because you see, here, the sunrays slant, and we don't get them. They're not as dangerous, but there they're straight down. And that is the reason that the terror could walk by day and by night, and that there could be sun stroke. And there could be those who were smitten by the stroke and even the moon at night they said. The light and heat were sufficient that it could strike some people, weak persons or old persons. And they just had to have shadow.

Oh, we sing, Jesus is a rock in a weary land, the weary land, the shelter in the time of storm. And in the desert land there, in the waste howling wilderness, the sun during those long days came straight down. Our missionaries in those areas have to wear helmets to keep from having sunstroke because of the rays of the sun. And they need shadow, they need shade. That's why they talk so much about our God being a shade and a shadow and a place of cool retreat, and a rock and a tree, because they needed shadow there in those days.

Now, we don't understand it physically as they did, but we understand it or should understand it spiritually. For we need a shadow from the heat as bad as they did. We need a shadow from the heat caused by friction and the heat caused by pressure, those two kinds of heat, and we desperately need them. The friction of moral incompatibility, incompatibility with the world; the incompatibility of the Christian heart with the world.

If you don't know what I mean, you're not anywhere near the secret place of the Most High. If I'm speaking a strange language and you know the English words, but you don't know what I mean, then I would urge you to turn your face toward the secret place and push on at any cost till you enter there, because there is a moral incompatibility with the world. Lot felt it in Sodom. The Scripture said he vexed, he chased, he irritated his righteous soul, for though he went to Sodom and failed tragically. He was a good man in a terribly bad city, and he couldn't do anything about it. He had no power to make them obey Him. So, he had to watch their wickedness. He had to see their evil. He had to. And thus, he vexed and irritated his soul.

There was a friction set up by the moral incompatibility between Sodom and the world. And there was Israel in Egypt, all the day in Egypt. Israel had to see that which shocked and wounded their Hebrew hearts. And Christ and apostate Israel, when our Lord came to apostate Israel, he walked up and down among them, and everywhere. Their religion of His day set up an irritation on His holy soul. And He was pressed between the upper and the nether millstone, ground, and the friction of His times. He said, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. His zeal for God, in a temple where there were cattle and money-changers and worldlings and hypocrites and lawyers and rabbis that knew not God. When He heard the name of His Father spoken by lips that never had known His Father, it set up a friction on the personality of Jesus and hurt Him and wounded Him. And Paul, in his epistles, tells about how he wrote even weeping. And the Reformers in their day were men of wounds.

Somebody told me about Rolland Pierce, who was one of the Keswick brethren from Philadelphia, and they say a great man of God there, though I have not met him personally, I've had correspondence with him. But somebody told me that Rolland Pierce had been at Highland Lake the year before. And one day on a walk, he said, Brother, I'm a wounded man. I'm a wounded man. He said, I'm happy in Christ all right, but I'm wounded because of the church. I'm wounded because of religion in America today. I'm wounded for what's going on. I'm glad he's a wounded man. I wouldn't solve his wounds. I wouldn't in any wise try to heal or to comfort. It's the wounded hearts that are going to win the world, or going to win Christianity back to Christ again in these last days. Only the wounded hearts ever know the true fellowship with God. And Paul, you remember, said he wanted to know the fellowship of His suffering in order that he might know Him.

Well, that suffering is necessary. And if you don't know what I mean by moral incompatibility. If where you work you manage somehow by being up on baseball and everything else, and the latest current Reader's Digest joke. If you manage to keep up on all that in order that you might live peacefully with the people you work with, then you don't know what I mean. If you don't know the loneliness and the heartache of being forced to work next desk to a man who smokes like Vesuvius and curses and embarrasses, if indeed it does embarrass the young ladies in the office by his off-color jokes. If you don't feel morally incompatibility there, and the vexation and the irritation of being good in a bad world, then you won't know what I mean. There will be no heat.

But to the Reformers, there was heat. And to the missionaries, there is heat. The missionary that must go out. Ed's in the Valley today along with the rest of them. Imagine it, nakedness around about them, dirty, smelly, foul, nakedness. And according to all that I can hear, a sexiness which is so terrible and base and obscene, that it's shocking and horrifying; and they've got to live with there. Well now, if that doesn't set up friction and heat, the heat of incompatibility with the world. Oh, we need the secret place of the Most High.

And always remember, the secret place of the Most High is not a place you leave to do battle with the Lord, because it's not a physical location. It is the place from which you reach out to do the battle of the Lord against the foe. Nobody needs leave the secret place of the Most High. When I go to preach somewhere, I don't say goodbye to the secret place, as the soldier does to the barracks and goes out to get shot at. But I take the secret place with me. And every one of you can have the secret place of the Most High right there where the incompatibility is. Right there where the friction is. Right there where the heat is, and you must have it. Then you can hide there. Now all the sons of heaven who are on the earth will know this friction, this heat.

And then there's a heat caused by pressure. Science and civilization have set up unthinkable pressures, simply unthinkable pressures. The pressure for instance to the human ear drums that come from airplanes. Now, I don't want to seem to be an old grouch who believes in the horse and buggy. I don't believe in the horse and buggy. I haven't ridden in a horse and buggy for many, many years and don't intend to go back to the horse and buggy. But they tell me that when we convert over to the rocket or jet planes, that it's going to be ten times noisier than it is now. I don't know what we'll do. We'll have to seal in our churches in order to be able to be heard when a plane goes over.

But science and civilization have set up pressures, the pressures, and that pressure creates heat. Those of you who've studied it know that a diamond is simply carbon. It's the same as the coal you burn in a furnace. But it is coal, carbon that has been put under such unspeakable heat, such tremendous, such terrific heat, that it is set up, pressure I mean, that it is set up a heat which is so high that I wouldn't even want to tell you for fear I'd miss it by thousands and tens of thousands of degrees. But that's what makes a diamond. A diamond is simply carbon under pressure, that's been put under pressure. And back in prehistoric times, perhaps, and such heat has been set up, a diamond has been made. Now, if you know how to do it, the heat and the pressure today can make you a diamond for the King's crown. But think of the appalling consequences of those who don't know where the cool place is while the heat's on. Think of the pressure of civilization.

As I rode along with my friend, Reverend Tracy Miller of Scranton. He came up for a couple of days and took me out for a drive around the hairpin turns and winding ways of the mountains, the Catskill Mountains. And there we saw a building, sitting off a great building, a huge thing, a series of buildings covering what seemed to be acres and acres and acres. And I said, isn't that a vast institution by the middle of what is it? He said, that's one of New York's institutions for the insane. And I said, what a vast thing, isn't it? Yes, and he said it is being added to continually, continually. New York is paying a price for being the hub of the universe. It's paying a price in the pressure set up by the high concentration of civilized gadgets and we are paying a pressure for it my friends, don't forget it. Don't forget it.

The farmer who chewed the straw with one foot on the lower rail and talked half an hour relaxed and restful over the fence to a neighbor, also chewing a straw, knew nothing of the pressure of the modern farmer who has mechanized his farm. Nothing of the pressure of the farmer who gets into his Piper plane and putts off somewhere to hear a professor lecture on how to get more out of his yield. He'll get more yield out of his farm. The pressure has been set up. The competition is so fierce, it's fierce everywhere. The competition in business, automobiles, manufacturers. Now, all cars are good cars now, competition has necessitated that. They've got to be. A poor car couldn't last at all. They're all good. But they're all lying about how good they are, in order to get just a little ahead. And if one of them finds one little button and adds it the next year, the other one has that button. And thus, the competition is on, the pressure, the heat, the terror of it. It's like a foot race. Have you ever seen the pictures or seen in reality, the boys that

make those mile dashes and see them when they come in. Their faces are so strained. Their eyes are set in their heads, and it looks as if they might die of heart failure. The pressure is so terrible; just 1/10 of an inch maybe of a second may be the difference between losing and winning that race.

Well, now that's where we are today. Everywhere, it's competition, competition. And in certain areas of the evangelical world, it is the same. Everybody's competing. Maybe you ought to have that kind of a man here. But you know, friends, years ago, I quit it. I don't care who has a bigger church than mine. I don't care who's better known than I am. I don't care. No competition, no jealousy, no competition. With my high nervous temperament, I would have been dead long ago, if I had not rested in God and found the secret place of the Most High and adopted a blessed, don't care attitude toward all the religious competition. Let them run their foot races if they want to. It's in the flesh. Let them tell how many people they have and how many dollars they have and how much they have. I don't care at all. Last week, I went down, the week before last, I went down and had my doctor give me a check over; took my blood pressure and said you live to be 150 at this rate. No blood pressure, I had some I mean, but I mean, not high. Why? I could have a high blood pressure, I could. I could have hardening of the arteries, but they feel my arteries and say, soft as a young man. Because I will not live under pressure. I will not do it. It doesn't do God's work any good. It doesn't help anybody. I will not live under the curse of pressure.

I have found the secret place, the hiding place of every precious thing. And there in the coolness of the heart of God, I can say, cool me O God and keep me cool while these hot breezes blow. And the magazines come out and everybody's pushing in, urging in, then the religious press, everybody. I get stuff here all the time for immediate release it says. When I see that, it goes into the wastebasket. For immediate release, somebody wants me to plug him in the Alliance weekly. I plug nobody. Let him earn his spurs. If he's a missionary and he's doing a good work, we will report what he's doing. If there is a good meeting somewhere, we put a little scrib up and tell the people to encourage the others to pray. God's still working. But we will not plug anybody, because that's carnal competition and heat. That fellow is running a temperature.

There is a place Brethren, where you don't have to be under pressure, but you don't have to run too much of the heat, just enough to make a diamond out of you but not enough to ruin you. A safe, cool, healing, restful life-giving place. It is the secret place of the Most High, and it's entered by faith in Christ. Not the best people, not the good people, not people specially fitted for it, but just anybody that will enter. Anybody that will enter and there's a way there, a blood-stained way. I heard Strat Shufelt on the record singing several times. They had records and played them out over the loudspeaker. I found a way through the blood, past the veil to the holy of holies with God. And I recognized Strat's good old voice and I wanted to shake his hand though he was miles away. And he sang about that holy place, that good, holy place where he'd found, through the blood, past the veil, in the holy place. Brethren, that's where we need to be today. And then, civilization won't kill us. It won't!

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