



Trusting
the Shepherd
INSIGHTS from PSALM 23

HADDON W. ROBINSON

Trusting the Shepherd

© 1968, 2002 by Haddon W. Robinson
Revised edition published 2002. Published
in a previous edition as *Psalm 23* by
The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

All rights reserved.

Discovery House Publishers is affiliated with RBC
Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Discovery House books are distributed to the trade
exclusively by Barbour Publishing, Inc.,
Uhrichsville, Ohio.

Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations
are from the Holy Bible: King James Version (KJV).
Other versions used: New King James Version (NKJV),
New International Version (NIV), New American
Standard Bible (NASB).

Book Design: Sherri L. Hoffman

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Robinson, Haddon W.

Trusting the shepherd : insights from Psalm 23 /
Haddon W. Robinson.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-57293-070-5

1. Bible. O. T. Psalm XXIII—Meditations. I. Title.

BS1450 23rd+ .R62 2002

223'.206—dc21

2002001592

Printed in the United States of America
06 07 08 09 10 11 / CHG / 9 8 7 6 5 4 3



Contents

Introduction: Meet the Shepherd	7
1. Listen and Follow	15
2. Defenseless, Dependent, and Helpless	23
3. Time Out	31
4. Rest and Refreshment	39
5. Close to His Heart	49
6. Following the Shepherd	57
7. Deep Darkness	65
8. The Darkest Valley	73
9. His Powerful Love	81
10. Protecting the Sheep	89
11. The Abundance of Faith	97
12. Hope for the Future	105
13. In His Presence	113

chapter one **Listen and Follow**



“The LORD is my shepherd”



Someone has observed that every major portion of Scripture was written by someone having a hard time to men and women having a hard time or about to have a hard time. Although that may not be completely accurate, it is true that the passages of Scripture we love best are the ones to which we turn in times of difficulty. No passage in the Bible, therefore, is more loved or more familiar than this Twenty-third Psalm.

The words of this psalm were probably not penned during the morning of David's life, nor were they written in the noontime of his career. The psalm must have been written during David's twilight years, for they are the words of a man who has lived much and done much;



TRUSTING THE SHEPHERD

someone who has greatly sinned and been greatly forgiven.

David writes as a king ruling in the capital city of Jerusalem. As he sits at his desk, memory comes and takes him by the hand and leads him back to his yesterdays. The great arches of his palace disappear, and in their place he sees the azure blue of a Mediterranean sky. David remembers how he cared for the sheep on his father's farm. He reflects on how he led the flocks to green grass and protected the sheep from danger. Then David begins to write, "The LORD is *my* shepherd; I shall not want" (italics added).

Christians sometimes misinterpret this little psalm. They read the opening verse as though it says, "The Lord is my Savior and I'm glad that He is." As wonderful as it is to know that the Christ is your Savior, that is not what this psalm is about. Psalm 23 is one of three psalms that are arranged together in the Psalter: Psalm 22, Psalm 23, and Psalm 24. Each psalm portrays a



different work of the Christ for His people. Psalm 22 sketches a prophetic picture of the death of the Savior on the cross. In it, David looks down across the hills of future centuries and sees the hill of Calvary with the suffering Messiah hanging on a tree. Psalm 22, therefore, deals with the “good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep” that we read about in John 10:11 (NIV). Psalm 23, however, deals with the “great shepherd,” resurrected for the sheep, described in Hebrews 13:20. Psalm 24 tells of the chief Shepherd who will return to reward those who care for the sheep, as promised in 1 Peter 5:4. Christians who have put their trust in the Christ as the Savior presented in Psalm 22 and who may even look forward to His return as the Sovereign in Psalm 24 may not experience in reality the work of the Shepherd described in Psalm 23. But when David sang of the Christ as Shepherd, he was praising the living God who was present in his daily life and supplied his deepest needs.

The word that David used for “LORD” was the name *Yahweh*. The Hebrew people were so much in awe of that name—and of the God it represented—that they substituted some lesser name for God when they came to it in the public reading of the Scriptures. *Yahweh* is the God who causes all things to be, and He is the God who brought the nation of Israel into existence. Yet this God who inhabits eternity is the One David speaks of as “my shepherd.” He is the God whom Christians trust as well. The Christ in whom we trust as a personal Savior is the same God by whom and through whom and for whom all things were created. That God is great enough to control the universe and guide the destiny of nations, and yet will take care of the needs of your life and mine. *Yahweh* the Creator visited this little planet of ours and was nailed on a Roman execution rack and died for our sin. It is this great God whose return we eagerly await, and it is *Yahweh* revealed in Jesus whom we trust with life itself, both for time and for eternity.



That is why a small word in the first verse of Psalm 23 takes on great importance. It is the little word *my*. Millions of religious people know that the Lord is *a* shepherd, but they really don't know that He is *their* Shepherd. How can you know that the God of the universe is actually *your* shepherd? Well, in John 10:27 Jesus declares: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Two simple tests can reveal whether you are one of His flock: "My sheep hear my voice," He said. That is the first test. Do you really listen to what He has to say to you through His Word? Then, Jesus said, "They follow me." That is the second test. Members of Christ's flock follow the leadership He gives them through His Word. It's as simple—and as sublime—as that. Those who belong to the Shepherd from heaven hear His Word and they follow Him.



TRUSTING THE SHEPHERD

Who is your shepherd? Your husband or wife? Your pastor? Your parents? Your psychologist? A close friend? As important as these people may be, they never can take the place of the Good Shepherd in your life. They are sheep too. Like you, they need Someone else, just as David did. And you can have Someone else if you give attention to what He says to you in His Word and simply follow His lead in life.

When you come to the place where every detail of your life is placed in Christ's care, you can say with a deep abiding certainty, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd. I shall not want."