

# A Psalm of Instruction -- Psalm 32

by A.B. Simpson

---

*A.B. Simpson's sermon on Psalm 32 emphasizes the deep understanding of sin, the provisions of salvation, and the joy found in God's guidance amidst life's troubles.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 32:1

**Topics:** "Divine Guidance", "Sin and Salvation"

---

## Description

A.B. Simpson expounds on Psalm 32, emphasizing its instructional nature regarding sin, salvation, trouble, and guidance. He defines sin through four terms: transgression, sin, iniquity, and guile, illustrating the profound consequences of each. Simpson contrasts these with God's provisions for salvation: forgiveness, covering, non-imputation, and the expulsion of guile, highlighting the transformative power of God's grace. He encourages believers to seek divine guidance and to rejoice in the blessings of salvation, urging them to live in the fullness of God's love and instruction.

---

## Transcript

The title of this Psalm is Maschil. It is a Hebrew word signifying instruction. It touches very deeply the whole experience of the child of God, from the first to the highest stages of life.

### I. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING SIN

Nowhere do we learn so much about sin in a few words as in the four terms here applied.

1. The first is transgression. This means to go beyond. It denotes the actual violation of the law of God by an act in contravention of a divine command. It represents positive disobedience. It includes all the overt acts of sin; all the deeds, words, and thoughts of men which they have committed contrary to God's precepts and commands. This alone is enough to form an awful account against the sinner in the divine impeachment, but this is only the beginning of sin.

2. The word sin is next used, and it describes the converse of this; namely, the coming short of God's will and law. The word here used means to miss the mark, to fail to reach our aim, and it includes that large and often overlooked class of evils, which we might call sins of omission. Little do we realize how much they mean, and how immense will be the account when we stand in the judgment of the Lord: all we might have been, all we might have done, all we might have said, all the sorrow we might have assuaged, all the sin we might have prevented, all the good we might have done, all the souls we might have saved. Oh,

what will it be to look at this someday, as God will show us the picture of the possibilities of life, and we shall feel we have lost it forever?

Here are two men passing into judgment. Both have had equal opportunities, equal talents, equal wealth, equal length of life. They have perhaps lived side by side and often passed each other on the path of life. The one goes home with his hands full of sheaves. He has spent his fortune for God and for holy usefulness. He has used his time to do good. He has often denied himself some special pleasure to save a soul, or to comfort a sorrowing one at the gate of heaven. He meets not only the smile of his Judge, but his works do follow him, and glorious trains of happy spirits welcome him. How many there are to greet him as their deliverer, their comforter, and the instrument of their salvation! What a large place in heaven is filled by the fruits of his love! What eternal and infinite horrors have been saved by his self-denial and his loving life service. All this has come out of one consecrated life.

And now the other meets his future. There is nothing to greet him. No happy spirits welcome him as their dearest friend. No white-robed saints lead him up to the throne as the one who led them to Jesus. But before him rises the vision of just such a heaven as his brother has received; just such a multitude as he, too, might have saved. But where are they? Down in yonder pit of darkness. As he sees what might have been in the light of what actually is for another, he awakes to realize what life meant; what it was not to do, not to sacrifice, not to serve the Lord. Oh, it will be an awful thing for such an one to meet his Judge, and see in the first flash of eternity's light all that he might have saved and kept forever; but it is all forever lost!

O saint of God, if you could blot out the precious fruit of your life, would you for a million worlds? But that is what every sinful man and selfish woman is doing. That is the meaning of sin: the things you have not done, the love you have not given, the faith you have not exercised, the service you have not rendered, the reward you have not won.

3. The word iniquity also has a distinct meaning. Literally, it signifies something twisted, perverted, turned aside from its divine intention, and so it represents the perversion of human nature from its high and holy purpose. Man has perverted everything. That thing which God gave for the noblest uses has been prostituted for selfishness and evil. Man's own body, created as the vehicle of the soul and its instrument of high and holy service, has been turned into the means of gratifying every unholy lust. The human mind, a ray of the divine and created to glorify God, has been used to glorify man, to worship the creature, to dishonor the Creator.

The very gifts of God and His infinite goodness have been abused as an encouragement to sin; and even religion itself has been turned aside from its sacred intent, and been used to serve the devil and promote the wicked selfishness of men. Surely men "have sought out many inventions." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

But the word 'iniquity' has a more general meaning. It is used to express, in a general way, the whole depraved nature of man. It represents the deep fountain of corruption from which all transgressions and sins proceed; for worse than the streams of evil that have filled the history of humanity is the deep fountain of sinful human nature from which all have sprung. Fetid and foul may be the fog that rises from yonder marsh, but far deeper and fouler are the slimy waters of the unclean things that lie beneath the service, from which these fogs are only exhalations. This is iniquity.

It is the vile human heart of which God says: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" And "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This is the real cause of human ruin. Our acts might be forgiven; our omissions might be overlooked; but our nature is ruined and only capable of continued evil, waxing worse and worse forever. Unless it be radically changed, it is incapable of happiness or holiness, and would turn heaven into hell, even as a leper's body would infect and poison a whole community. There is nothing to be done with this wicked human heart but to destroy it.

4. There is still another term for sin -- guile. This is the subtlest and most hopeless of all the characteristics of sin. It is utterly false, crooked, dishonest. We have often felt, in dealing with sinful man, that there was hope for the most abandoned and depraved, if we could only feel that the man was true and sincere; that he really was ready to acknowledge his sin without palliation or excuse, and truly longed to be right. There is hope for such a man. But when you feel a man is not honest and true, and that he is only deceiving you, playing with you, and using the cloak of religion for some mean and sordid motive, you feel that you can do nothing with him. He is irretrievably lost.

It is this double heart in man, this lack of uprightness and sincerity which makes his case so desperate. And this is the case with all men naturally, for the old serpent, the father of lies, rules in the children of disobedience, and makes them like himself, deceiving and being deceived.

Oh, what a category of evils: transgression, sin, iniquity, guile! If you have ever seen your heart as God sees it, you may well cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

## II. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING SALVATION

God has four provisions to set over against these four names of sin.

1. The first is forgiveness. This has to do with our acts of evil. They render us liable to punishment; and when God forgives us, He acquits us of all charges, conceals the judgment against us, delivers us from guilt and punishment, and treats us as if we had not sinned. This is the purchase of Christ's blood; this is the offer of the Gospel to all who will sincerely repent and accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, to all of you who read these lines "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

2. Covered. "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered." This is fuller, deeper, and more definite. It tells us of the great facts and principles that lie back of the forgiveness. Something had to be done to purchase this forgiveness, to provide for this settlement, to make right the relations between the sinner and the law of God. There had to be a covering.

Go back with me to Eden. See that guilty pair cowering with shame. It is not that their forms are naked. They, poor souls, are conscious of being exposed to the holy eye of God. Their sin is uncovered, and they cannot bear the exposure. So they take the fig leaves and sew them together, and put them on their persons. The searching eye of God has found them out, but His compassion provides a better covering. He bids them take those spotless lambs that stand before them, and doubtless, confessing their sins with their hands upon their heads, He slays the victims as sacrifices for their guilt. Then He takes the skins from their bleeding bodies, all dripping with crimson drops, and He puts them on their persons as a covering of blood, reminding them of the great Sacrifice that was yet to come, and by His blood make expiation for their guilt, and then by His righteousness cover their souls with spotless robes.

This was the meaning of the lid of the ark in the ancient tabernacle. It was the covering all sprinkled with blood which hid the broken law from the eye of Him who looked down from between the cherubim. The word propitiation means covering, and this word is applied to Christ. "And he is the propitiation for our sins"; that is, the covering for our sins. When the poor publican smote upon his breast and cried to heaven for mercy, his prayer was "God be the propitiation for me a sinner." He saw that there must be a covering.

This was the meaning of the blood upon the doorposts of Israel's tents when the destroying angel passed by. Jesus, the Great Sacrifice, in this beautiful type, was covering them from the wrath of the avenger. Beloved, are your sins not only forgiven, but covered, canceled, and forever put away through the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses from all sin?

3. Not imputed. This word literally means not to think. It not only describes the judicial act of God in acquitting the sinner and dismissing the charge against him, but it means still more: it means that He forgets as well as forgives, and thinks of us no longer in the light of our sin, but treats us and loves us as if we had never sinned. He puts it quite out of His heart, and never again upbraids us with its faintest suggestion.

This is the wonderful part of God's forgiveness; it is so generous, so affectionate, so ennobling, that He takes away from the poor, guilty, shamefaced criminal cringing at His feet, every sense of shame, and lifts him up into His confidence, and gives him the self-respect and dignity of a prince and a child. There is something wonderful about this in God, and yet some of us understand it in our human relations. We want to trust those we love, and we must trust them perfectly. We know what it is to be unwilling to lose confidence in a friend, and to cling to that confidence even when we might suppose that it was not deserved. How the parent continues to trust his child, and refuses to doubt him even though he knows him to be wrong, until at length his noble confidence has ennobled its object! God is unwilling to lose confidence in us; and when He justifies us, He determines to trust us, and begins to treat us as if we were worthy of perfect trust; and indeed He makes us worthy by His confidence and by His grace.

How beautifully this comes out in some of His words respecting His people! "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel." Plenty there was to see, but He would not see it. He said: "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior." Lie they often did, but He would not believe it, but resolved to love them into goodness. He has been loving us and ennobling us by His love, and holding fast to us in His strong purpose of full salvation, and every moment He looks upon us in the light of that loving purpose as we shall be when we shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom" of our Father.

Oh, how wonderful this confidence of God! But how good and kind He is to exercise it toward us. How we love Him for it! He has sworn that He "would not be wroth" with us, "nor rebuke" us. This draws us to His bosom and makes us love Him and love to please Him. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord does not impute iniquity," and against whom He will not even think one thought or shadow of his former self.

4. The expulsion of guile. "In whose spirit there is no guile." God not only refuses to think a thought of evil against us, but He actually takes the evil away by putting in us the true heart, the honest will, the new spirit, and the single eye to choose and please Him. He drives out the evil to bring in the good. So we have the fourfold salvation over against the fourfold sin: forgiveness, atonement, love, and cleansing. All this is for us in the finished and perfect work of Christ. For "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Oh, the blessedness of the man who receives

this full salvation! All our sorrows come from sin, and in full salvation we find our perfect joy. Do you know all this in its fullness? Is the blessedness of this great salvation even now filling all your being with the glad amen of praise to God?

### III. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING TROUBLE AND SORROW

We have two kinds of sorrow in the next verses. One is the trouble of the impenitent sinner trying to override his conscience and be happy in his sins. But the Psalmist could find no peace this way. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." Oh, the misery of a guilty conscience and a hidden sin! But, oh, the relief that comes to the penitent heart! "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

We have also the picture of the sorrows of the saint, but they do not touch him. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." And then he sends up his shout of triumph: "You are my hiding place; You will preserve me from trouble; You will encompass me with songs of deliverance."

How free! Our spirit springs above all care and sorrow when we enjoy the love and peace of God. How light the burdens of temporal distress when the heart can spring and sing in the triumph of the Lord's great love! Only let us see His gracious face and know that He is pleased, and we can sing above the darkness and the storm,

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,

And storms of sorrow fall;

May I but safely reach my home,

My God, my heaven, my all."

### IV. INSTRUCTION ABOUT GUIDANCE

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with my eye."

1. We have God's instruction. The forgiven and saved soul needs to be taught, and how graciously He teaches and opens up His Word!

But more than instruction is needed. Direction also in practical duty is required. "I will . . . teach you in the way you shall go." This is more than knowledge; this is wisdom. And this He gives by His Holy Spirit to the sanctified judgment, and makes us know what we ought to do.

2. "I will guide you with my eye." This is more than being taught in our mind. This is something finer, more delicate, more divine. I have seen a drill master stand before a class of hundreds of young children, and by a glance that I could scarcely detect, direct every movement of their hands, and feet, and faces, with the utmost precision. But how closely they watched him! He was guiding them with his eye. Is this the meaning of the verse? Does it teach us that we are to keep our eyes so constantly fixed upon God that we will catch His every movement, and always know His will by the smile of His approving countenance? Yes, it is true, and it may be the meaning of the verse. But it seems to us there is still a closer meaning.

It seems to us that He offers in this verse to put His own eye in us, and enable us to see with His eyes, and not with our own. There is a great difference in these two things. Looking at people with your eyes,

you get narrow, selfish views. Looking at people with Christ's eyes, they seem so different. You can love and bless them. He is willing to put His mind in us, to let us think His thoughts, to see all things even as He sees and knows. But in order to do this, we must renounce our wisdom; we must subject our judgment to His; we must crucify our opinions and thoughts, and be willing to be fools that we may be wise.

In order to have the divine guidance in this blessed way, we must be yielding and obedient. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you." The horse and the mule cannot be guided by intelligent sympathy with the driver. And so many Christians have to be held by the Lord with a strong hand, because they will not let God draw them near enough to guide them with His eye.

Oh, let us not be servants but friends, of whom the Master can say: "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Finally, this Psalm contains instruction about joy. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous : and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." Yes, they who know the blessedness of this full salvation, and let the Lord bring them into the sweet place of trust and guidance, may well rejoice and shout for joy.

Blessed is the man that is forgiven, but more than blessed is the man who lets God guide him with His eye.

Let us not be behind the spirit of these ancient Psalms. Three thousand years nearer the throne than they, oh, surely, we should have a louder, sweeter song. Let us rejoice in the Lord evermore.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ab-simpson/a-psalm-of-instruction-psalm-32/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**