

Job Repents to God of Uttering Things He Understood Not

Job Chapters 42:1–6

Job 42:1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

ONCE a man has been sufficiently humbled by the Lord and confession of sin is made, all the previous agitation that has existed in his soul subsides. Sincere repentance of sin will therefore produce for the penitent a spirit of peace entering into and then abiding within his heart. Hence where previously there was only contention and confusion because of sin's presence, once it is both confessed and repented of by the sinner, then God's spiritual rest will begin filling his soul. This is now thankfully true of Job. He has recognized his sin, confessed it as wrong, and as a result has entered into sweet fellowship with the Lord. How wonderful also it is when erring and rebellious men confess their transgressions, admit their guilt, and recognize their sin against God! Then wisely, instead of denying their sin,¹ they are forgiven through the grace and mercy of God. *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah* (Ps. 32:5). The conflict, struggle, and contention between the

Lord and Job have now ceased, and Job is more than willing to confess his ignorance of God and how this same prideful insolence has led him to sin against Him.

Job 42:2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

Job's confession begins with his fresh understanding of God's power and ability not only to do anything and everything but also to be able to see everything, and consequently He knows all that transpires in the sinner's heart. Whereas previously Job had believed his thoughts could be concealed from God, now he knows they never could be. As God has revealed through both Elihu's words and His own reproof, every thought of the sinner is both remembered and taken into account. No thought can be withheld from God, and now Job knows this to be true of himself.² For what he had thought in secret ultimately was made known in public.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 42:2) One great object of the address of the Almighty was to convince Job of his majesty, and that object was fully accomplished.

¹ *I John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

² *I Chrn. 28:9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. I Kgs. 8:39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) Ps. 44:21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*

Luke 5:22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

Jer. 17:10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Rom. 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Not until men spiritually perceive God's ability to detect all the thoughts and intentions within their hearts will they realize that even thoughts are counted as sin against God.³ Job's confession therefore reveals his recent spiritual awakening that no thought can be hidden or kept secret from the Lord. Much of what both Elihu and God had spoken to Job dealt with the internal part of his being, his hidden cogitations and un-uttered words, which he had privately uttered against God. It was this spiritual understanding that God can see all, knows all, and is aware of every thought in the human heart that ultimately brought Job to his knees. *And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth* (I Cor. 14:25). Not only then had the Lord heard Job's words, but He had also taken specific account of Job's thoughts.⁴ No doubt, Job's internal reasonings, speculations, and deeper ruminations were just deeper accusations against the Lord and extended even further than even Job's erring words.⁵ Practically, sin lies not merely in what sinners do but is equally present and accountable in what they think.⁶ And just as the inside of the cup is the most unclean,⁷ so also are the thoughts of the sinner far more evil

and accusative of the Lord than even the incriminating words he speaks. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Gen. 6:5). By divine standards, to think something in the heart⁸ is reckoned exactly the same thing as doing it.⁹ To think against God and bring false accusations against Him is therefore in God's estimation spiritual rebellion.

Job 42:3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

Because of Job's spiritual ignorance, his pride blinded him to believe he knew more of the Lord than he really did. This human ignorance has resulted in Job's sinning against the very One Whom he initially thought to praise.¹⁰ For this sin he is ready to take full accountability for committing: *therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.* The emphasis is on *I*: *have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.* Job's use of *I* is used with purposed and intentional design, simply because he had come to spiritually realize that he,

3 Matt. 5:28 *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

4 Matt. 9:4 *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

5 Job 40:2 *Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. Job 40:8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?*

6 Heb. 4:12 *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

7 Matt. 23:25 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*

8 Zech. 8:17 *And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.*

Prov. 15:26 *The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.*

Rom. 2:5 *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

9 Matt. 5:28 *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

10 Job 1:20–21 *Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, ²¹And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

and no other, was the source of his sin. Job now no longer blames his friends or his God, Whom previously he had foolishly thought had wronged him. Undoubtedly by this time Job is fully aware that to wrongly blame others for sin, especially the Lord, is actually a denial of it. For none can deny his sin and have the truth of God and His Word living within him. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8). Denial of sin is common and was seen in Adam's attempt to transfer his sin to Eve, with Eve also doing the same thing in regard to the devil,¹¹ when in fact all three who were involved in sinning against the Lord in the garden—Adam, Eve, and the devil—were collectively judged for the sin they committed.¹² King Saul also tried unsuccessfully to transfer blame to the people for his sin of willful disobedience to God's commandment.¹³ Hence, though it was absolutely true that Job's friends had troubled him and the devil had both

tempted and assaulted him, none of this mattered now. Job wisely knew within himself that he alone was at fault and that personal confession alone could repair his broken but mercifully salvageable relationship with God.

That which Job did not previously know about God he now astutely confesses as *too wonderful* to be known.

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 42:3) too wonderful—I rashly denied that Thou hast any fixed plan in governing human affairs, merely because Thy plan was “too wonderful” for my comprehension.

History details that God allows certain events in men's lives so that His purposes can be fulfilled for them. Joseph was sold into slavery not only because of the envy that lived in his brothers' hearts but also, and most importantly, because this was part of God's plan for his life.¹⁴

11 Gen. 3:11–13 *And [the Lord] said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*¹² *And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*¹³ *And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

12 Gen. 3:14–19 *And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:*¹⁵ *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*¹⁶ *Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*¹⁷ *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*¹⁸ *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;*¹⁹ *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

13 I Sam. 15:19–23 *Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?*²⁰ *And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.*²¹ *But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.*²² *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*²³ *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

14 Gen. 45:4–8 *And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.*⁵ *Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*⁶ *For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.*⁷ *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*⁸ *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

Moses also was abandoned as a child¹⁵ for the singular purpose of being raised up in Pharaoh's court so that he might adequately be prepared to lead God's people out of Egypt.¹⁶ This is verifiable of so many of the saints of old, and it should be considered equally true for the Lord's people today. Hence, in what proved to be the case with Job, Joseph, Moses, and so many others, when it seemed initially that they could be viewed as victims of their circumstances, actually the Lord was purposing a much higher and nobler design in their lives. Ultimately God has a distinct and blessed purpose for every child of God. And this purpose is always and without question to work all things for their final good.¹⁷ But if men fight against this purpose and accuse God of

injustice and sinning against them, then they are entering into a very real conflict with the Lord—simply because to complain against God's will for your life and accuse Him of sinning against you is to question both the sovereignty and goodness of God.

Job's journey was both lengthy and difficult to bear, but in the end his newfound wisdom and knowledge of God, were priceless. Whereas previously Job had only heard of God, now he had actually come to see Him.¹⁸ Job had therefore learned much spiritually, which only a trial like this could have accomplished. He was understandably quite humbled and thankful for the spiritual lessons he had been taught. And although the journey

15 *Exod. 2:1–6 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. ²And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. ³And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. ⁴And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. ⁵And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. ⁶And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.*

16 *Exod. 14:21–31 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²²And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. ²³And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians. ²⁵And took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians. ²⁶And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. ²⁷And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. ²⁸And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. ²⁹But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. ³⁰Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. ³¹And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.*

17 *Jer. 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Eph. 1:4–6 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Eph. 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

18 *Job 42:5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.*

was long, the spiritual illumination was indispensable and would forever change Job's faith, his view of God, and his opinion of himself.

Job 42:4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

(*Benson Commentary*, Job 42:4) The words which God had uttered to Job by way of challenge, Job returns to him in the way of submission.

Once God had sufficiently humbled Job's heart, Job was now in a position to answer God properly. Whereas Job had previously been afraid of offending God through his speech, now he knew that he was able to carry on a proper discourse with the Lord without any inward trepidation. His confession had produced a clean conscience, a heart free from internal accusation, and ultimately a newfound, holy, spiritual confidence. Having now been sufficiently humbled and realizing the degree of his spiritual error, he assumes the role of a receptive and intractible pupil: *declare thou unto me. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end* (Ps. 119:33).

Job 42:5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

It is one thing to hear of God *by the hearing of the ear* and quite another, and a more profound thing, to actually see Him. Hence whereas previously Job had only heard of God and what others had said concerning Him, now, after his trial, he could actually see the Lord. It is this result that is the purpose of divine trials, so that those who successfully undergo them are brought to spiritual enlightenment, enabling them to perceive the Lord's very personal and intimate involvement in their lives.

(*Benson Commentary*, Job 42:5) *But now mine eye seeth thee*—"It is plain," says Dr. Dodd, "that there is some privilege intended here that Job had never enjoyed before, and which he calls a sight of God. He had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, or the tradition delivered down from his forefathers; but he had now a clear and sensible perception of his being and divine perfections; some light thrown in upon his mind, which carried its own evidence with it; and which to him had all the certainty and clearness even of sight itself."

Nothing is as transformative to the sinner's soul as when God and His glory become visible. It is this sight of the Lord that is the very first step of being transformed by Him. It is also the process of beholding God that practically transforms the sinner. *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord* (II Cor. 3:18).

Job 42:6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Here we observe that Job no longer claims any personal self-righteousness.¹⁹ Instead, because of God's intervention in his life, his spiritual evaluation of himself has dramatically changed. Whereas previously he had exalted himself, pridefully thinking himself able to question the Lord, now he abhors the very same man he once defended. But even though Job abhorred himself, the result produced was quite the opposite as what might be expected. For whenever there is sincere and genuine repentance for sin, a healing in self will be produced—since all truth, even truth purposed for man's contrition, if believed, sets men free.²⁰ There are thus two primary results that will be evidenced when confession of sin is made by the penitent. The first is an indignation and hatred for the sin. This is not an ungodly reaction

¹⁹ Job 27:6 *My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.*
²⁰ John 8:32 *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

but is actual proof of sincere remorse for the sin committed. The second result will be a renewed spiritual energy entering the soul as the person is determined never again to sin in the same manner again. Because God also forgives the penitent, the weight of sin will be lifted and a fresh new spiritual life can begin. Second Corinthians speaks of this process, when men experience godly sorrow and are spiritually energized to pursue a much holier life. *For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter* (II Cor. 7:11). Barnes' notes on this topic are lengthy but worthy of consideration, to learn how godly sorrow and genuine repentance for sin can produce transformation in the soul.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Cor. 7:11) *For behold this self-same thing*—For see in your own case the happy effects of godly sorrow. See the effects which it produced; see an illustration of what it is suited to produce. The construction is, “For lo! this very thing, to wit, your sorrowing after a godly manner, wrought carefulness, clearing of yourselves,” etc. The object of Paul is to illustrate the effects of godly sorrow, to which he had referred in 2 Corinthians 7:10.²¹ He appeals, therefore, to their own case, and says that it was beautifully illustrated among themselves.

What carefulness—(σπουδὴν *soudēn*). This word properly denotes “speed, haste;” then diligence, earnest effort, forwardness. Here it is evidently used to denote the diligence and the great anxiety which they manifested to remove the evils which existed among them. They went to work to remove them. They did not sit down to mourn over them merely, nor did they wait for God to

remove them, nor did they plead that they could do nothing, but they set about the work as though they believed it might be done. When people are thoroughly convinced of sin, they will set about removing it with the utmost diligence. They will feel that this can be done, and must be done, or that the soul will be lost.

What clearing of yourselves—(ἀπολογία *apologian*). Apology. This word properly means a plea or defense before a tribunal or elsewhere; Acts 22:1; 2 Timothy 4:16.²² Tyndale renders it, “Yea, it caused you to clear yourselves.” The word here properly means “apology” for what had been done; and it probably refers here to the effort which would be made by the sounder part of the church to clear themselves from blame in what had occurred. ... The whole church was roused, and all felt, and all endeavored in the proper way to free themselves from the blame, and to remove the evil from among them.

Yea, what indignation—Indignation against the sin, and perhaps against the persons who had drawn down the censure of the apostle. One effect of true repentance is to produce decided hatred of sin. It is not mere regret, or sorrow, it is positive hatred. There is a deep indignation against it as an evil and a bitter thing.

Yea, what fear—Fear lest the thing should be repeated. Fear lest it should not be entirely removed. Or it may possibly mean fear of the displeasure of Paul, and of the punishment which would be inflicted if the evil were not removed. But it more probably refers to the anxious state of mind that the whole evil might be corrected, and to the dread of having any vestige of the evil remaining among them.

Yea, what vehement desire—This may either mean their fervent wish to remove the cause of complaint, or their anxious desire to see the

21 II Cor. 7:10 *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

22 Acts 22:1 *Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.*

II Tim. 4:16 *At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.*

apostle. It is used in the latter sense in 2 Corinthians 7:7,²³ and according to Doddridge and Bloomfield this is the meaning here. Locke renders it, “desire of satisfying me.” It seems to me more probable that Paul refers to their anxious wish to remove the sin, since this is the topic under consideration. The point of his remarks in this verse is not so much their affection for him as their indignation against their sin, and their deep grief that sin had existed and had been tolerated among them.

Yea, what zeal—Zeal to remove the sin, and to show your attachment to me. They set about the work of reformation in great earnest. . . .

In all things ...—The sense of this is, “You have entirely acquitted yourselves of blame in this business.” The apostle does not mean that none of them had been to blame, or that the church had been free from fault, for a large part of his former Epistle is occupied in reproving them for their faults in this

business, but he means that by their zeal and their readiness to take away the cause of complaint, they had removed all necessity of further blame, and had pursued such a course as entirely to meet his approbation. They had cleared themselves of any further blame in this business, and had become, so far as this was concerned, “clear” (*ἀγνοῦς hagnous*) or pure.

Whenever there is true recognition of sin, as evidenced in Job, and also a godly and healthy repentance for it, many positive results will follow. This includes indignation and hatred for the sin committed, a fear of ever repeating it again, a vehement desire to be cleansed by God from it, and a zeal for even greater spiritual transformation in the life. No doubt, most if not all of these things were experienced in Job's life—preparing him for an even more pure pursuit of godliness and fellowship with God in the future.

²³ *II Cor. 7:7* And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

