

## Chapter 21

# *Job Repents to God of Uttering Things He Understood Not*

### *Job 42:1–6*

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

**O**NCE 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. Repentance for sin will produce for the penitent a spirit of peace entering into and abiding within his heart. 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 the soul. This spiritual reality is now 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 it is when erring and rebellious men confess their transgressions, admit their guilt, and recognize their sin against heaven! And as a wonderful result, they are both forgiven and cleansed 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 spiritual ignorance.

*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 new spiritual understanding of God's power and ability not only to do everything but also to see everything. Whereas previously Job had believed his inward feelings could be concealed from the Lord, now he knows they never could be. As God has revealed through both Elihu's and His own correction, every thought of the sinner is not only observed but also remembered. No thought can be withheld from the Lord,<sup>1</sup> and now Job understands this spiritual reality to be true concerning himself. What he had spoken and thought in secret has now been made known publicly.

Not until men spiritually perceive God's ability to detect the deep contemplations and intentions of the heart<sup>2</sup> will they realize that even thoughts they surmised able to be concealed can be counted as

<sup>1</sup> *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. Luke 5:22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?*

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

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sin against them.<sup>3</sup> Job's confession reveals his spiritual awakening that no thought can be hidden or undisclosed from the Lord. Much of what both Elihu and God had spoken dealt with the internal ruminations of Job's being, his hidden cogitations and unuttered words. 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, prompting his spiritual repentance. *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 had the Lord heard Job's words, but He had also taken specific account of his internal spiritual dissatisfaction. No doubt, Job's thought-to-be-hidden presumptions were just deeper accusations against the Lord and extended even further than his erring words.<sup>4</sup> Practically, sin does not simply lie in what sinners do but is equally present and accountable in what they think. And just as the inside of the cup is the most unclean,<sup>5</sup> so also are the thoughts of the sinner far more evil and accusative of the Lord than even the incriminating words he outwardly voices. *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 heart is reckoned exactly the same as either speaking or doing it.<sup>6</sup>

*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 had blinded him to believe he knew more of the Lord than he really did. This temerity resulted in his sinning against the very One Whom he initially thought to praise.<sup>7</sup> Because of his new spiritual enlightenment, Job was now fully ready to take responsibility for his sin: *therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not*. The emphasis is on I: *I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not*. The I is used with purposed and intentional design, simply because Job had come to spiritually realize that he, and no other, was the source of his sin. He no longer blamed his friends or his God. It was he who had hidden God's counsel because of a lack of knowledge of the Lord, and he who had uttered things concerning the Almighty that he understood not. Undoubtedly by this time Job was fully aware that to wrongly blame others for sin, especially the Lord, was actually a denial of it. None can truly deny his sin and continue to possess the truth of God's Word living within his heart. *If*

3 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.*

1 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.*

4 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?*

5 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.*

6 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.*

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.*

7 Job 1:20–21 *Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, <sup>21</sup>And 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.*

*we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 John 1:8). The sinner's denial of sin is common and is first observed in Genesis in Adam's attempt to transfer his sin to Eve, with Eve doing exactly the same thing in regard to the devil.<sup>8</sup> Yet in the end Adam, Eve, and the devil were all spiritually judged for the sin they committed.<sup>9</sup> King Saul also tried unsuccessfully to transfer blame to the children of Israel for his sin of disobedience to God's commandment.<sup>10</sup> Thus, though it was absolutely true that Job's friends had troubled him, and the devil had both tempted and assaulted him, Job was now fully aware that his own sin is what had produced conflict with the Lord and ultimately could never be transferred to anyone other than himself.

As a further admission of his spiritual ignorance, Job confessed that there were

many things concerning the Lord *too wonderful* to be known. The Lord's plan had been intricate, far beyond human understanding, and well above Job's natural ability to comprehend its final godly purpose. God's wisdom, Job rightly confessed, was far above his own.

*(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.<sup>11</sup> Moses was abandoned as a child<sup>12</sup> for the singular purpose of being raised up

8 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?*<sup>12</sup> *And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*<sup>13</sup> *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.*

9 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.*<sup>15</sup> *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.*<sup>16</sup> *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.*<sup>17</sup> *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;*<sup>18</sup> *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;*<sup>19</sup> *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.*

10 *I Sam. 15:19–21 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?*<sup>20</sup> *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.*<sup>21</sup> *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.*

11 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.*<sup>5</sup> *Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*<sup>6</sup> *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.*<sup>7</sup> *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*<sup>8</sup> *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.*

12 Exod. 2:1–6 *And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.*<sup>2</sup> *And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.*<sup>3</sup> *And 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.*<sup>4</sup> *And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.*<sup>5</sup> *And 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*

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in Pharaoh's court so that he might adequately be prepared to lead God's people out of Egypt.<sup>13</sup> In what proved to be the case with Joseph, Moses, Job, and many others, when it seemed initially that they could be viewed as victims, actually the Lord was purposing a much higher and nobler design for their lives. Ultimately the Lord has a distinct and blessed purpose for every child of God. This purpose is always and without question to work all things for their final good.<sup>14</sup> But if men fight against divine will, and foolishly accuse God of injustice, then they will very quickly find themselves in conflict with Him—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 new-

found wisdom and knowledge of God were priceless. Whereas previously he had only heard of God, now he revealed that he had actually come to see Him.<sup>15</sup> Job had learned much spiritually, which only a trial like this could accomplish. And although the journey was long, the spiritual illumination was indispensable and would forever change his faith, his perception of God, and his opinions 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 the Lord had sufficiently humbled him, Job was now in a position to answer the Lord properly. Whereas this servant

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sent her maid to fetch it. <sup>6</sup>And 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.

13 *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. <sup>22</sup>And 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. <sup>23</sup>And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. <sup>24</sup>And 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, <sup>25</sup>And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians. <sup>26</sup>And 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. <sup>27</sup>And 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. <sup>28</sup>And 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. <sup>29</sup>But 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. <sup>30</sup>Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. <sup>31</sup>And 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.

14 *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.

*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.

*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:

*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: <sup>5</sup>Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup>To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

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

of God had previously been afraid of offending God through his speech, now he felt fully confident to carry on a proper conversation with the Lord without any spiritual trepidation. His confession had produced a clean conscience, a heart free from internal accusation, and a new holy, spiritual confidence. Having been sufficiently humbled and realizing the degree of his error, he now assumed the role of a penitent and teachable pupil. *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 come to see Him: *but now mine eye seeth thee*. Where 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, in order that those who successfully undergo them are brought to the spiritual enlightenment of actually coming to see the Lord. As with Job and also with ourselves, divine trials are purposed to remove spiritual blindness—so that if the Lord cannot be truly seen before the trial, He will be able to be accurately perceived after it.

*(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 the Lord and His glory become visible. It is this sight of God that is the very first step of being transformed by Him. It is also the process of beholding the Lord’s glory that practically aids in transforming 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.<sup>16</sup> Whereas previously he had exalted himself, thinking himself able to question the Lord’s justice, now he abhors the very man (himself) whom he once defended. Though Job now despises both his ignorance and uncleanness before God, the result in his heart is quite the opposite of what one might expect, simply because whenever there is sincere and genuine repentance for sin, a healing in self will be simultaneously produced. All truth, even truth purposed for man’s contrition, if believed, sets men free.<sup>17</sup>

Two primary effects will be evidenced when confession of sin is made by the penitent. The first is an indignation and hatred for the sin committed. This is not an ungodly reaction but is actual proof of sincere remorse for committing sin. The second is a renewed spiritual energy to never again transgress in the same manner. Because God forgives the penitent, the weight of sin will be lifted and a fresh new spiritual walk can begin. Second Corinthians speaks of this process, when men experience true godly sorrow and then become spiritually energized to pursue a much holier life. *For behold*

<sup>16</sup> 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.*

<sup>17</sup> John 8:32 *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

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*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. They reveal how godly sorrow and repentance for sin will produce true and lasting spiritual 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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 apostle. It is used in the latter sense in 2 Corinthians 7:7,<sup>20</sup> 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 indig-

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

19 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.*

20 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.*

nation 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 sincere recognition of and repentance for sin, as evidenced with Job, spiritual transformation will be the result. This includes indignation and hatred for the sin committed, a determination never to repeat it again, and a renewed holy desire to live more godly before God. This was proven true concerning the Corinthians, true with Job, and it will also be proven true with us. By acknowledging our sin, we can be both forgiven and cleansed from it and consequently purified from all previous unrighteousness,<sup>21</sup> which is an eternal testament to the manifold grace, mercy, and goodness of God. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins* (Isa. 43:25).

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<sup>21</sup> *I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

