

Job 42:1-9**The Greatest Gift of All**

¹ Then Job answered the Lord and said:

² "I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³ 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

⁴ 'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.'

⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;

⁶ therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."

⁷ After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. ⁸ Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. – Job 42:1-9 ESV

Job had been in search of answers from God but, instead, he had ended up discovering God himself. His quest for justice, vindication, and explanations for his suffering had forced him to seek God and, in the end, what he found eclipsed his any of his expectations. Job's unexpected and unwanted sufferings actually brought him closer to God. Ever since his trials had begun, Job had been in a constant search for relief and redemption, and while he received those things in full, they were nothing when compared to his restored relationship with God.

Job has suffered much at the hands of Satan, but also as a result of the critical words of his friends. But as the book comes to an end, God has stepped into the scene and administered a profound theological lesson that has left Job virtually speechless. The only words that come out of his mouth are statements of praise and contrition.

*"I know that you can do anything,
and no one can stop you."* – Job 42:2 NLT

*"I was talking about things I knew nothing about,
things far too wonderful for me."* – Job 42:3 NLT

*"I take back everything I said,
and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance." – Job 42:6 NLT*

Job's encounter with God left him a changed man, and while the restoration of his health and wealth would have an impact on his life, it was the change within his heart that produced the greatest transformation. Job confessed that his relationship with God had been dramatically altered because his understanding of the Almighty had been greatly expanded. His suffering and subsequent face-off with God had opened his eyes to things he had never considered before. His knowledge of God had moved from the head to the heart. Rather than having to rely on purely theoretical concepts, Job had moved to an experiential understanding of God.

*"I had only heard about you before,
but now I have seen you with my own eyes." – Job 42:5 NLT*

God had become real and relatable. He was no longer distant and disconnected from Job's daily life but was an up-close and personal God who had chosen to meet with Job face to face.

He has spoken and condemned Eliphaz and his friends as having spoken out of turn. In fact, God tells them, "you have not been right in what you said about me" (Job 42:7 NLT). He commands them to offer burnt offerings for their sin and to have Job pray for them. If they don't, God would be forced to deal with them according to their folly.

After 42 chapters of dialogue, the most important part of the story of Job seems to be the lessons he learns about his God. Up until this point, Job's understanding of God was based on what he had heard about God. His was an academic, intellectual understanding of God, and it showed up in his diatribes against God. But now he realized that he was wrong. He had spoken out of turn and out of ignorance. But now, Job's view of God had changed because he had experienced and heard from Him.

And isn't that what God is always trying to do – reveal Himself to men? He wants us to know Him, not just know about Him. He wants us to experience Him – in all His power, mercy, grace, and love. That is why He sent His Son – as a living revelation of God on earth in the form of a man. In Jesus, we see the character of God come alive. He gave us an up-close and personal glimpse of God.

For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body. – Colossians 2:9 NLT

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ. – Colossians 1:19 NLT

It was the apostle Peter who encouraged followers of Christ to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18 NLT). Yet, for too many of us, our knowledge of God is what we have heard, read, or assumed. Our understanding of God is limited to what we have been taught or told. It lacks the personal, experiential touch.

Our God ends up being distant and, at times, a little difficult to know. But God wants us to know Him. He wants us to see and experience Him in our everyday lives. He challenges us get to know Him better.

*"Stop your striving and **recognize** that I am God!" – Psalm 46:10 NET*

In Hebrew, that word "recognize" means "to know, realize, see, find out, discern, or to know by experience." God wants us to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He truly is who He says He is. He wants us to know **by experience** that He is God.

It is in the daily experiences of life that God wants to reveal Himself, including our trials and difficulties. He wants to display His glory and goodness in those impossible situations that come our way, in our relationships, finances, health, homes, workplaces, and those moments of doubt and fear.

Job didn't come to know God because God blessed him. The restoration of Job's health and wealth were not the impetus for his improved understanding of God; it was he because actually *heard* from God. God spoke to Job and the truth about Himself. He gave Job a glimpse of His power and majesty by comparing Himself to His own creation.

The interesting thing is, He never gave Job an explanation for what had happened. He never defended Himself to Job because He didn't have to. He was God. He simply reminded Job who it was he was complaining to. He reminded Job of His power and sovereign will. God didn't owe Job an explanation. He also didn't owe Job reparations or compensation of any kind. But Job learned that he owed God reverence and respect.

With Job on his knees in repentance, God turns attention to Eliphaz and his friends, and He shows them no mercy.

"I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has." – Job 42:7 NLT

What happens next appears to be a test of the validity of Job's heart transformation. God commands Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to offer an atoning sacrifice for having misrepresented themselves as His spokesmen and for having misspoken about His character. They had neither heard from God nor fully understood the nature of God, but they had not let that stop them from speaking on behalf of God. So, God required them to make atonement for their sins, and then he commanded Job to pray for them.

"My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer on your behalf. I will not treat you as you deserve, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has." – Job 42:8 NLT

One can only imagine how difficult this assignment would have been for Job. These three men had caused him untold amounts of grief and suffering. They had berated and belittled him. They had falsely accused him. And now, God was asking Job to act as their intercessor. If Job would pray for them, God would withhold His judgment of them. That means that Job held their lives in his hands. He could have refused to petition the Lord on their behalf. In his anger and resentment, He could have chosen to get even and give them over the God's judgment. But he didn't. His heart had been changed and his desire to please God was greater than his need for vengeance or vindictiveness.

We know Job prayed because the text tells us "the Lord accepted Job's prayer" (Job 42:9 NLT). The sacrifices were made, Job's supplication was offered up to God, and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were forgiven.

Four separate times in these verses, God refers to Job as his servant. He wants Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to understand that their estimation and subsequent condemnation of Job had been totally wrong. They had declared Job to be wicked and immoral. They had accused him of committing acts of injustice and unrighteousness. And yet, God repeatedly refers to him as "my servant Job" (Job 42:7, 8). Job's sufferings had not been a sign of sin. His losses had not been evidence of wrongdoing. Throughout it all, Job had remained a servant of God. He was a suffering saint who endured tremendous pain and loss in this life but whose relationship with God had remained unchanged.

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, the author chronicles the lives of Old Testament saints who, like Job, exhibited faith in the midst of sorrow and loss. These men and women were willing to endure great pain while still holding onto to their belief in the goodness and greatness of God.

...others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us. – Hebrews 11:35-40 NLT

Job's reputation was restored. His integrity and good name were vindicated. But God was not done. In a demonstration of divine mercy and grace, God will prove Job's innocence by putting everything back to the way it was before Satan entered the scene. God will graciously and abundantly bless His servant Job and allow him to once again experience the joys of his former life. But the greatest gift Job received was his restored relationship with God.