

When God Is Silent During Difficult Times

I have a word for all of us living through the **global challenges** of the 21st century and in particular for those who on a personal level are facing what you would call the worst day of your life: *Everything is going to be all right*. I believe that. ... I believe it because it is a great promise from God Himself: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28, NKJV).

I don't say this glibly or cheaply but with deep conviction and full assurance of **faith**. Everything is going to be all right. This is the overarching message of the gospel. God is going to set right a world gone wrong, and God is going to set right what's gone wrong in your life. God deals in both immensity and minutia. As the supreme intelligence behind the laws of physics, God is the engineer of the universe, and He is interested in both cosmology (the study of the very, very large) and quantum mechanics (the study of the very, very small).

God's interest in the whole range of astrophysics is nothing compared with God's interest in the whole range of **human experience**. God is concerned about His creation on a cosmic scale and on the personal level. God intends to redeem all of creation through the work of the cross, and He is also concerned about the tiny episodes in your individual life, even to the extent that He bothers to count the hairs on your head (see Matt. 10:30). God has a plan to redeem the cosmos, and God has a plan to take care of you. Everything is going to be all right.

So we continue to pray, to **trust God**, to build our faith on God's Word, to frame our worldview from Paul's masterpiece

epistle to the Romans (especially chapter 8), and, despite any and all evidence to the contrary, we dare to believe that everything is going to be all right. We do this because we believe God is in charge and that He loves us and has promised to intervene in our lives with love and grace. Of this the apostle Paul was certain. He was firmly and absolutely “persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).

Of course we want everything to be all right *now*. This is our common human experience. But because everything is not all right in the present moment, we are prone to **panic** and forget the promise. So remember this: In this present moment, you are enveloped in the love of God in Christ Jesus. Right now there is nothing that can separate you from that love. Everything is going to be all right, but the work of making everything all right may take some time. So, having believed the promise of God, you simply wait in hope for God to keep His promise and work all things together for good.

From time to time we hear a story that reminds us how God can work all things together for good. Here’s one that I believe will encourage you:

Antony Flew grew up in a Christian home in London, where his father was a prominent Methodist minister. No doubt Antony’s parents hoped and prayed that their son would follow them in their Christian faith. The young man was **extremely gifted** intellectually and, as a boy, attended a school for children of Methodist ministers, founded by John Wesley, the father of Methodism. While at that school, Kingswood School in Bath, England, Flew began to abandon the faith of his parents. He tells the story himself in this manner: “By the time I reached my fifteenth birthday, I rejected the thesis that the universe was created by an all-good, all-powerful God.” Antony Flew had

become an **atheist**.

Later, as an undergraduate at Oxford, Flew attended the weekly meetings of C. S. Lewis's Socratic Club, often engaging Lewis in debates concerning the existence of God. Flew went on to become the world's leading intellectual atheist, publishing some 40 works on atheism and often being described as atheism's foremost "evangelist." Flew also regularly engaged leading **Christian apologists** in debates concerning the existence of God, the resurrection of Jesus, and life after death. We can only imagine the pain this caused his Christian parents, who were giving their lives in Christian ministry. We can only imagine how they continued to pray for their son.

In 2007, I was returning from India and was changing planes in New York. During the brief layover I walked into an airport bookstore to find some reading material for the final flight home. While browsing in the **philosophy** section, I noticed what appeared to be a significant book: *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*. The author? You guessed it—Antony Flew. I was stunned! I bought the book and read the whole thing on my flight back to Kansas City. It's probably the best apologetic work I've ever read on defending the existence of God. But it's more than just an argument for the existence of God; it is a fascinating autobiographical story of Flew's long, slow journey from atheism to belief in God.

Antony Flew is now 85 years old, and his parents have long since died. But their prayers live on—prayers that have now been answered. The strange and wonderful thing is, Antony Flew will probably end up doing more to bring people to belief in God through his late-in-life conversion following a lifetime of atheism than if he had followed his father into Christian ministry. I'm not suggesting that God was responsible for Flew's atheism—I don't believe that—but I am suggesting that this is a marvelous example of God working **all things together for good**. I suspect Flew's Methodist parents would agree.

How bad a day was it for Reverend and Mrs. Flew when their son announced that he had become an atheist? Could it perhaps have been the worst day of their lives? But that wasn't the end of the story. Flew's parents did not live to see the answer to their prayers, but their prayers have been answered nonetheless, and in some strange mystical way we really can't understand right now, I believe that this couple will one day indeed rejoice. They will laugh with joy, they will give praise to their God, and they will shake their heads as they wonder and marvel over the incredible power of God to turn their story around.

Could it be people like Reverend and Mrs. Flew whom the writer of Hebrews is referring to in Hebrews 11:13 when he writes, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them"?

In this life we will have some bad days. Some may be so bad that recovery seems impossible. But all things are possible to him who believes. On the worst day of your life, perhaps the best thing you can do is remember this promise: "All things work together for good," and dare to believe that your situation, too, will work out for good and that somehow everything is going to be all right. Remember, your times are in God's hand. He is the artist who has promised to weave all things in such a way that in the end your story will truly be a story of beauty, a work of art, God's masterpiece that can never be marred or touched, His beautiful tapestry of grace.

Editor's note: *In the preface to his new book, What to Do on the Worst Day of Your Life, Brian Zahnd writes: "Today a lot of people in America are going through a hard time: economic uncertainty, trillion-dollar bailouts, wide-scale layoffs, rising unemployment, massive home foreclosures, and the destructive repercussions from the stress these realities*

place on families and individuals. And all this is happening in the context of tremendous social, cultural, political, and spiritual change in twenty-first century America.”

That’s certainly not news to those of us living in the midst of the conditions Zahnd describes—and there’s nothing prophetic about it. But what is prophetic is the message Zahnd brings to those of us suffering from these and other calamities in our lives: “Everything is going to be all right.” How does Zahnd, pastor of Word of Life Church in St. Joseph, Missouri, know this is true? He believes the story of the biblical character David—and modern-day stories such as the one he shares below—provide proof that God is truly about the business of working all things together for our good. [Click here](#) to read more about how God turned things around for David after he experienced the worst day of his life, and how David’s response to tragedy can be a pattern for our own.

And don’t forget to forward this article on to others you know. I can’t think of anyone who wouldn’t benefit from Pastor Zahnd’s encouraging word! – Maureen Eha