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The Great Turnaround

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

There have been some memorable final-round comebacks in golf's four Majors. At the 1996 Masters, Nick Faldo came from 6 strokes back to overtake Greg Norman and claim his third green jacket.

Arnold Palmer's lone US Open victory came at Cherry Hills in 1960, as The King fired a 65 and overcame a seven-stroke deficit.

Likewise, Johnny Miller came from seven strokes back to win the 1973 US Open with his legendary 63. But when it comes to the biggest turnaround in the final round of a major, we need to turn to the 1999 Open Championship at Carnoustie.

Unfortunately, what most people remember is Jean Van de Velde's unbelievable collapse after holding a three-shot lead on the 18th tee. But this story is about turnarounds, not failures, so let's explore the positive angle.

Scotsman Paul Lawrie was in the top ten after two rounds, but then stumbled to a 76 in round three, dropping him into a 14th-place tie, a full ten shots behind Van de Velde.

Now the stage was set for his great turnaround. On Sunday, he fired a 67, which vaulted him into a four-hole playoff with Van de Velde and Justin Leonard. Lawrie then birdied the last two holes of the playoff to claim the Open Championship.

By reversing his third-round score of 76 to 67, and coming from ten shots behind to win, Paul Lawrie stands as the greatest turnaround champion in the history of the Majors.

Nevertheless, the greatest turnaround in history is recorded in the Bible, especially in the New Testament gospels. On the dark hours of Good Friday, after being falsely accused, arrested, and convicted, God's Son, Jesus Christ, endured hours of abuse, torture, and ultimately crucifixion on the Cross at Calvary.

Luke's gospel describes the scene: "And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him." (Luke 23:27). These were the people who believed his claim to be the Messiah. We can only imagine their shock and horror at what they were observing.

Knowing how much they loved him, there must have been countless prayers—fervent, passionate, desperate prayers—asking God to intervene and save the one who called himself God's Son.

But it seemed that God was silent, and their prayers went unanswered. However, two days later on Easter morning, Jesus rose from the tomb to triumph over sin and death, just as he had promised. By not rescuing Jesus on that Good Friday, God was able to save humanity on Easter Sunday.

If you ever want proof that God can turn something hopelessly bad into something good, look no further than this story. As theologian Eli Stanley Jones said, “Calvary changed from the world’s greatest failure [seemingly] to the world’s greatest success.”

Indeed, it was the greatest turnaround in history, and a wonderful and powerful example of how God can work “all things” to fulfill his good purposes.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we ponder the amazing story of the Cross, we are reminded that no matter how hopeless a situation may appear, your sovereign plan and good purposes will always be accomplished. Amen

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