



Trusting in God in Trials Out of Our Control

Can great results come from situations that bring discomfort or even pain? Of course they can, as any athlete will attest. In any sport, it is understood that purposeful, even excruciating, training is necessary to win the prize as is accurately echoed in the phrase “no pain, no gain.”

This reality is not reserved for the sports world. The cause and effect relationship of planned discomfort to reach a goal is common to many areas of life, from health issues to politics, business, education, and even something as basic as learning to walk. Knowing this, we tend to judiciously choose “purposeful” pain, because we prefer that any discomfort contribute to a goal that seems worthwhile to us. Basically, we want our challenges to be known, planned for, and have predictable outcomes. To achieve this, we must be “in control” or, at least, think we are.

Nevertheless, challenges are notorious for not being under our control. With this in mind, we should remember that all aspects of life, including our trials, are under God’s control (*Lamentations 3:37-38: Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?*).

God’s sovereign ways and thoughts are beyond our understanding (*Isaiah 55:8-9: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts*). Even though we cannot comprehend His sovereignty, we are assured that His oversight will not compromise His righteousness, justice, love, and faithfulness (*Psalms 89:14: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you*).

We can have great hope in times of difficulty when we remember that God knows our frailty (*Psalms 103:14: For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust*). He will not allow anything to come into the lives of His children beyond what they can bear (*1 Corinthians 10:13: No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it*).

As followers of Christ we can be confident that, even in the worst of times, God can accomplish His good beyond anything we could imagine (*Romans 8:28-29: And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren . . . Ephesians 3:20-21: Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen*). The good that God accomplishes in our lives is our maturity in Christ and, ultimately, God’s glory.

For all of us, trials are part of our lives, but Jesus has promised His help to those

who believe in Him (*John 16:33: I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world*). In every trial, God’s grace is sufficient (*2 Corinthians 12:9: But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me*).

As a result, we can be conquerors in ways that we may not anticipate, since nothing can ever separate us from God’s love (*Romans 8:38-39: No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*).

Reflecting on God’s personal involvement in trials, we are to gratefully and confidently rely on His strength and wisdom to carry us through any situation (*Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths*).

We are to trust His all-sufficient Word in every aspect of life and in all relationships (*2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work*).

We are to cast aside mere human wisdom to try and accomplish His purposes (*1 Corinthians 3:19-20: For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile”*).

In any trial, we are to follow the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who trusted Himself to our loving, heavenly Father (*1 Peter 2:21-23: For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly*).

If we look only to ourselves or others for answers, we soon learn that any perceived “gain” coming out of trials is often more “pain.” Yet, as we face and endure trials that are out of our control, we learn to prayerfully trust God as He works His will in us. Even in pain, we discover true joy on the path to greater Christ-likeness (*James 1:2-4: Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*). Through trials, we can grow in Christ and realize that any “pain” associated with trials cannot be compared to the eternal “gain” that He has promised (*Romans 8:18: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*).

Trials can draw us closer to the Lord. There is no greater gain in spite of the pain.