As a parent it is so easy to want to spare our children as much pain as we possibly can. I have been guilty of that myself on occasion. And I will admit that some of the hardest things I have had to do as a Dad has been to allow my daughters to go through hard and difficult things. I will never forget watching parents go to coaches and complain about the fact their child was not playing enough or was playing the wrong position. There were times I wanted to do the same thing myself. But I realized that as hard as sitting on the bench rather than playing would be, there were lessons to be learned about perseverance and never quitting, lessons about dealing with disappointment and hurt, lessons which she would need to learn in order to honor the Lord in her life.

When we go through disappointing or hard things in our lives, it is easy to lose our focus. There are times that our physical pain is such that we find it hard to think of anything else. Or it may be that the emotional turmoil with which we live causes us to seek ways to escape the struggle. Part of that is normal, but as Christians we need to be careful that we do not simply try to avoid every hard thing that comes our way. It may be that God is shaping and molding us and helping us to teach us perseverance. One of the most precious things for a Christian is to remain faithful to our Lord and to *Finish Well*.

That is where Perseverance comes in. How can we endure the big things, the difficulties which may come our way if we are constantly complaining and trying to escape every little thing that comes along. Let's look at these verses in James together.

James 1:2-3 (NIV) Consider it pure joy, my brothers, <u>whenever you face trials</u> of <u>many kinds</u>, [3] because you know that the <u>testing of your faith</u> DEVELOPS PERSEVERANCE.

Life Application Bible Notes: "James doesn't say if you face trials, but whenever you face them. He assumes that we will have trials and that it is possible to profit from them. The point is not to pretend to be happy when we face pain, but to have a positive outlook ("consider it pure joy") because of what trials can produce in our lives. ...God wants to make us mature and complete, not to keep us from all pain."

PRAYER: Lord, God help me to remember that You always have a purpose for everything that you bring into my life. Help me to be able to look at the hard things that I have to face and to Trust You for the ability to sing of Your wonder and glory even through darkest circumstances.

Pastor Mark Kieft