Endure Un-ensnared

The last two teams to play in the FIFA World Cup final were Spain and Argentina, who faced off in the 2026 championship match. Initially, teams representing 48 countries took part in the series, with Spain attaining the number one spot of World Champions. Google AI asserts, "Soccer is widely considered one of the hardest sports in the world to master. While picking up the basics is relatively easy, playing at a high level requires an extreme combination of elite endurance, rapid decision-making and precise hand-eye coordination with your feet." I only watched snippets of the games (because the games were so long) but can easily understand why AI states the game requires "elite endurance" - the players never stopped running!

The Hebrew writer helps us appreciate the athletic style endurance we as Christians need to posses as we compete in physical life for our spiritual souls. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). Ensnared means to be caught in a trap, or to be entangled and unable to escape (Cambridge Dictionary). What the Hebrew writer is telling us is to live spiritually in such a way that we do not get tripped up (think of the hand-eye, foot coordination needed by the soccer player).

Our life of faith is comparable to an endurance run (1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrews 12:1-2). We need to understand Christianity as long completion (consider how long those soccer games were). There will be difficulties, moments of happiness and distress, peaks and valleys in faith and strength. Such is why we need to run with endurance.

We must run the race and stay actively in the completion with endurance. As long as we are in our physical body, we still have further to go. Despite being an Apostle and a Christian, Paul continued pressing toward the goal for what we may describe as all of his later adult life (Philippians 3:13-14). We must never believe that we have reached the peak of complete faith. Growth is often painful. Growth might also come with a cost (family, friends, etc.). Growth may lead us to have different troubles than we had at the beginning. However, God makes it clear that if we are not growing we are dying (Revelation 2-3). Let us press upward toward the goal with endurance!

As Peter exhorts, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).