

## 26. Snakes and Ladders too



The game seems to have had its origin in India, where the snakes represented vices, and the ladders virtues. Don't you find that snakes of weakness in your life cause you to slide down into a mess and unhappiness, and the noble choices you make in your day, causes you to feel better? It may be as simple as passing up on some junk food offered, through to sacrificially taking extra time with a student when you were all focused to get to the staff room for some adult chat and a cup of tea. Each time you make the virtuous choice, the noble side of you is strengthened, and a propensity to choose the way of the Kingdom at the next junction is enhanced. Just as snakes exist towards the end of the game, great saints of the past, tell us in their autobiographies, that drawing really close to God, still means an intensity of struggle with one's selfishness. Darkness is still able to ambush one even there. But going down snakes mean repentance, restitution and forgiving oneself for failing. It also requires and pressing onwards. It is self condemnation and despair of ever overcoming one's areas of vulnerability to temptation, that cause us to be moribund and then descending further snakes. And ladders can come our way when we are active in pursuing means of grace: keeping company with inspiring people, deliberately choosing to expose ourselves to positive media, investing time in the bible and meditating on it, persisting with practising the presence of God across our day...and all the other disciplines that build us up. Life might seem to give some people more "lucky breaks" than others, but most great entrepreneurs say that they "made their own luck". We believers don't go much at all on luck, but we do want to position ourselves so we move towards the base of ladders, and don't merely plod through our professional life. It's not all about just getting to the end of the game and making it safely into retirement and then heaven-our focus is the journey too, we *run to become*-not just to arrive, in the race of life. After a great success many church leaders have gone down a snake. Elijah sees fire from heaven fall on his altar, but goes into a snake of severe depression right after victory. We need to be wary when we are enjoying the blessings of achievement. And when we sin and fail our emergence from that lesson and repentance can put us up an exhilarating ladder to new levels of ministry. So today lies before you in your institution, the drama of life in your profession. There are plenty of retired teachers and lecturers who would gladly swap places with you, and move from the sidelines and into the arena of glory. Go forward, Godspeed as you serve the Master with the empowering of His Spirit.

