

Reading: Psalm 35:18-28

"I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered" (Mt 26:31; Zech 13:7)

Though all Christians will have to pass through trials and tribulations, those in Christian ministry and leadership will be the primary target of the devil. We don't remove a tree by plucking off leaves or cutting off branches. The axe will be laid at the "root" of the tree! Having been in Christian leadership for over three decades, I would say that those in leadership positions must not be envied but pitied. Godly leaders never came up to their positions by their choice or grabbing of seats. More often than we think, God puts them there more or less by compulsion. He would not accept their excuses to assume such responsibilities (Ex 4:10-13; Jer 1:4-8).

Constant weight of responsibilities, sleepless nights due to pressures and problems, frequent travels, hectic schedule, pressures due to unrealistic expectations of people, non-cooperation and strife among coworkers, challenges and threats from the enemies of the gospel, financial strain, family problems, repeated temptations and scores of such things tire the leaders physically, exhaust them mentally and drain them spiritually. No wonder even champions like prophet Elijah cried, "It is enough, Lord, take my life!" (1 Ki 19:4).

The Strike-the-Shepherd operation of Satan has gathered momentum in these last days. Every other preacher is ill with some chronic disease. God's servants meeting with frightful accidents is no more a surprise. Family conflicts and moral failures are commonplace. Corruption is rampant. Only now the people are understanding that preachers and leaders are not angels but just human. Preachers have prayed enough for people. It's now the people's turn to pray for the preachers.

The cross of loneliness is the heaviest for leaders. The closest disciples were fighting for prominence and positions while Jesus was preparing to drink the cup of bitterness. They slept off while He was sweating blood. Even the guardian angels were absent for a while. It appeared to Jesus on the Cross that God also had forsaken Him. Dear friends, do all that's possible to encourage the leaders, refresh them and support them. If they do well, you only will be the beneficiary.

*Jesus, I my cross have taken — All to leave and follow Thee;
Let the world despise and leave me — They have left my Saviour too;
Foes may hate and friends may shun me — Show Thy face; All is bright!*
(Henry F. Lyte, 1793-1847)

Glorious Heavenly Father,

We come to You in the Name of Christ the Chief Shepherd. We thank You for those men and women who continue Your service to mankind after Your Son left the earth. We pray for the shepherds who go seeking the lost sheep. We pray for the shepherds who keep feeding the sheep in the fold. We pray for the shepherd-leaders who shepherd the shepherds.

Father God, we realize that these leaders are the primary target of the devil. Protect them, O Lord, in all areas of their life and ministry. We confess before You that we are not supporting them enough in prayer, as Aaron and Hur supported the hands of Moses. Forgive us, O Lord, for speaking against our leaders when they fall or fail, instead of weeping for them before You in secret intercession.

O Lord of Grace, we pray that the spiritual life of our leaders may become deeper and richer day by day. Reveal Yourself, Your wisdom, and Your ways to them afresh everytime they open the Bible. Remove all blindspots from them. Strengthen their inner man to fight temptations. Keep them, O Lord, under the precious blood of Jesus. Let them never fall into the pit of self-condemnation.

O God of Wisdom and all Knowledge, we pray for the mental health of our leaders. Grant them clarity of mind in all matters. Help them overcome worries by casting them all on You. Fill them each morning with Your joy and peace. Let them never lose zeal and enthusiasm. Keep them away from all forms of depression.

Father God, we pray for the families of Your servants, especially those in leadership positions. The family of every other preacher or pastor has unsolved problems and unsolved conflicts. Have mercy on them, Lord. How much such unpleasantness at home pulls down their spirits! We pray for Your healing balm to cure these ills.

Gracious Lord, we know that You take pleasure in the prosperity of Your servants. Let them prosper and be in health, even as their souls prosper. Bless their bread and water. Heal their sick bodies. Strengthen their physique. Grant them, O Lord, many fruitful years of ministry with sound health and happiness. In Jesus' Name, we pray! Amen!

*(1 Pet 5:4; Lk 15:4,5; Ex 17:12; Psa 119:18; Eph 3:16; Heb 9:14;
Rom 16:27; 1 Pet 5:7; Psa 90:14; 35:12; 3 Jn 2)*