

WHO ARE THE ABLE MEN?

Moses received advice from Jethro, his father-in-law, to share his ministry with others as it was too much for one man to handle. The people of Israel had just left the land of bondage, Egypt. More than two million of them were in the wilderness. They had many problems and there was only one man who could help them. He was Moses. They would line up the whole day just to see him for about a few minutes at most. Moses was tied down by these people with their problems. The people who had problems were also unable to do anything else as they had to stand in line the whole day just to see Moses. Jethro saw what transpired and advised Moses to share his workload because this was not good for him.

This wise counsel from Jethro to Moses is recorded for us in **Exodus 18:17-23** (KJV), "And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest *is* not good. **18** Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee: for this thing *is* too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. **19** Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: **20** And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. **21** Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, *to be* rulers of thousands, *and* rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: **22** And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, *that* every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the burden* with thee. **23** If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee *so*, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace." [Emphasis added]

Must Continue to Teach God's Holy Word—Moses was not to neglect the more important task of teaching God's Holy Word to the people. The ministry of teaching the Will and Word of God was one which other leaders could not do. Moses had to teach them the laws and ordinances of God even as the people struggled with life's problems. When Jethro said, "the thing that thou doest is not good" he did not mean that assisting the people of Israel with their problems was not good. What he meant was that it was not good for one man alone to handle the task of seeing to their needs and problems. He needed help from others. The people who helped Moses must be able to help the people to look up to God. Therefore, more than just rendering help, they had to teach the people to trust and lean on God and not man. To do that Moses needed to teach these "helpers" the Word of God, i.e. the ordinances and laws of God. Moses also needed to show them the way they needed to live their lives so that they would not become stumbling blocks as they assisted him in God's Word. Moses also needed to teach them what to do to achieve the above goals. When his "helpers" were able to do these things, then they were genuine helpers indeed. Otherwise they would only add to his trials and problems. Moses needed to spend time to teach God's Word and not be encumbered with many of the administrative matters which capable and spiritual men could assist him with.

This was also true of the early Apostles when the church grew in numbers. The Bible records in Acts 6:2-4, *“Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”* They realized that the daily administration of the needs of the members took up too much of their time which they needed for the study of God’s Word and prayer. It was not that the distribution of food to help the poor members was not important but there were some ministries which others could help to do and other ministries that only the Apostles could do. They needed to look for able men too.

No matter how capable the individual is (a man like Moses was unique and very capable), he cannot serve alone. He needs help. All servants of God do.

Must Choose Able Men—Moses needed able men. Who were these able men? The qualifications were not of this world. Their education level and standing in society were not factors for consideration. The requirements were all spiritual in nature and their character and heart conditions were paramount. The reason was that they were needed to make spiritual decisions, not carnal ones.

- a. They must fear God — To fear God means to be afraid of God. All believers ought to be afraid of God. They know that they bear His holy and blessed Name everywhere they go. They know that the world is dying in sin. They have a duty and responsibility to witness for Him by living a life of faith and holiness. They do not want God to be angry with them. The more they mature in faith the more they know God. The more they know Him the more they do not want Him to be angry with them. The way to avoid God’s anger is to live a life of holiness. This means that the moment a believer is aware that he has sinned, he must repent of it and make right with whoever he has sinned against (if that is the case). This is required of all born again believers, and much more for the leaders of God’s people on the earth!

When the leaders of the people of Israel or church fear God, they will not fear man. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. A believer has this fear in his heart at the start of his journey of salvation. This fear of God must remain. Fear of man can be a very crippling sin. It can cause the leader to capitulate and not make right judgements. He could vacillate back and forth and be lost in his own dilemma, knowing the right thing to do but not having the courage to do it. But when the able man fears God, he will desire to please God according to the Bible at any cost. He will not be easily intimidated by any man or any threat. He will do what is needed because it is the right thing to do for the glory of his God. The “man” used here is generic. It includes women and children too. There are church leaders including pastors and elders who are afraid of their wives. They do not want their wives to be angry with them and so they do what their wives want. I have seen and heard wives screaming and shouting at their husbands who are pastors or elders, and they were so intimidated that they submitted

silently. Such elders and pastors are not fit to lead because they fear their wives more than they fear God. Obviously man's fear is not limited to the fear of man but also the fear of death, losing face, losing possessions, losing prestige in the eyes of man, and failures. Therefore, leaders at all levels of the church must possess this vital quality for godly leadership. They must fear God at all costs by obeying His holy and perfect Word at all costs.

- b. They must be men of truth—Truthfulness is one of the hallmarks of godly men. They will speak the truth and do what is truthful. They will also demand truth from all those whom they counsel and help. They will weed out all errors in the testimonies they hear and liars will be warned and rebuked accordingly. They will be very objective and not make decisions based upon the face of man. Regardless of who they are helping, right is right, wrong is wrong. They will be impartial in their judgements. **Deuteronomy 1:17** sums up very well the judgement of able men who possess these virtues, *"Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it."* Sadly this is not the case in many churches today. "Respecting faces in judgement" has become the name of the game for some churches' leaders. Wealthy and important people are treated preferentially the moment they enter the church doors. These people expect to be treated in this manner in the church because they have been treated in this manner by the world. In no time at all the church becomes exactly like the world where judgements are based upon the faces of men! These leaders are sinful leaders and have brought great shame to the name of Christ and great injustices to the cause of Christ. They should be sacked with immediate effect and be punished for their great sin.

Able men must know that the judgements they make are not their own but God's. They are actually standing in the place of God on the earth when they make judgements concerning God's people and God's work. If they respect faces in judgement, then they are saying that God will also do that. But God is never like that because He is no respecter of persons! God will not let such people escape His wrath for the damage they have done to His Name and His work.

In order for these able men to be men of truth (subjectively), they must first be men of the Truth (objectively, i.e. the Bible). Those who do not know God's Truth cannot be men of truth because they cannot discern between truth and error. How can they make God's judgement when they do not know what God's judgement is?! The Bible says in **Hebrews 5:14** (KJV), *"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."* Elders and deacons are supposed to be men who devour strong meat, who know the Bible very well. This means that they are keen and consistent students of God's Truth. They never stop studying. More than just accumulating head knowledge their lives are also lived in light of God's Truth. Otherwise, they are just great hypocrites! Do

not be impressed by the head knowledge. What matters most is obedience to and love for God's Truth.

- c. They must hate covetousness—The love of money is the root of all evil. To not love money is not enough; they must hate covetousness. To covet is to desire and want what belongs to others. This desire will breed discontentment which will inevitably lead to greed and a man will sell his soul for a piece of bread. **Proverbs 28:21** (KJV), *“To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.”* His judgement will be coloured by what is “offered” to him and he will have his price. Once the price is met, he will sell his decision to the highest bidder.

The desire for material things is what materialism is all about. He measures his life based upon materialism. This has been the bane of our society for eons. There does not seem to be any way to get out of this materialistic world other than to die! This is so true. Every believer has died in Christ and with Christ! The old man that used to love materialism is dead. The new man is now alive in Christ; and the life that he now lives in the flesh he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loves him and gave Himself for him.

These three qualifications define the able man. These three qualifications are intertwined. The able man possesses all three of these qualifications at the same time. It is not two out of three but three out of three. Any time that these men “lose” one of these qualifications, they will compromise and lose their effectiveness and cease to be able men. These are qualities that must be found in the members of Calvary Pandan BPC because the leaders are taken from them. Amen.