

Elder Bobby Willis



### Who Acts First? God or Man?

Many questions have been raised over the years as to the first action in obtaining eternal life for an individual. The question really is: *'Does God act first on behalf of man, or, does man initiate the first action in securing his salvation?'* To find the answer we can use the old *"cart before the horse"* saying which has been around for years. The horse is the action and the cart is that which is drawn. It simply will not work any other way. Who then is the horse and who is the cart? If one says that man makes the first step in his salvation is like saying that God is the cart and is passive (no life), depending on the man (horse) in-order that salvation may be obtained. Actually, the truth is that God is the drawer (horse - power) that enables the cart to move from a dead state (passive) to a life in Christ.

Let's take a look at scriptural proof rather than an old saying to see that God works first in the heart of an individual, then man works in obedience to the calling of God. Life precedes action. The man (cart) has no ability of his own to even comprehend the gospel or come to any saving knowledge of God. It requires the Spirit of God to act upon him first.

Notice what the Apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 2:14, **"...the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** The natural man is one who is in the flesh, also referred to as one that is **"dead in trespasses and sins"** (Ephesians 2:1). In a dead condition, man is as a cart without a horse, it cannot function on its own, it must have the horse (God) to accomplish it's intended purpose. The intended purpose of God's children is to serve the Lord.

Matthew speaks of God working first in our lives in Matthew 11:27, **"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."** The revealing comes when the child of

God is born of the Spirit of God (called, quickened). Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:6, **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”** Then, in verse 8, Jesus tells Nicodemus how one is born again and this action is not by man, but is an action of God; **“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”**

So, bottom line is that God acts first in the life of those He loves and imparts His holy spirit which gives them a new heart. Ezekiel 36:26 explains it by saying, **“a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”** This **“heart of flesh”** the Lord will give to His children is a heart capable of understanding the Love of God, the bestowing of His grace, and how Merciful God is to those Christ died for.

If you truly love the Lord and He has born you again of His Spirit, then you can say, **“We love him, because he first loved us”** (I John 4:19), and because the horse draws the cart as shown in John 6:44, **“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”** Now, meditate, contemplate, and *Think About It!*