

From John Piper “What Happens in the New Birth”
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Teaching on the New Birth is unsettling for three reasons:

1) Because of Our Hopeless Condition

When Jesus tells us that we must be born again he is telling us that our present condition is hopelessly unresponsive, corrupt, and guilty... Apart from amazing grace in our lives, we don't like to hear that about ourselves. So it is unsettling when Jesus tells us that we must be born again.

2) Because We Cannot Cause the New Birth

Teaching about the new birth is unsettling because it refers to something that is done to us, not something we do... This is unsettling. We are told that we won't see the kingdom of God if we're not born again. And we're told that we can't make ourselves to be born again. This is unsettling.

3) Because the Absolute Freedom of God Confronts Us

If we are going to be born again, it will rely decisively and ultimately on God. His decision to make us alive will not be a response to what we as spiritual corpses do, but what we do will be a response to his making us alive. For most people, at least at first, this is unsettling.

“What happens in the new birth is not the getting of a new religion but the receiving of a new life.”

“What happens in the new birth is not merely affirming the supernatural in Jesus but experiencing the supernatural in yourself.”

“In verse 2, Nicodemus says, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” In other words, Nicodemus sees in Jesus a genuine divine activity. He admits that Jesus is from God. Jesus does the works of God. To this, Jesus does not respond by saying, “I wish everyone in Palestine could see the truth that you see about me.”

Instead, he says, “You must be born again or you will never see the kingdom of God.”

New birth means a new life. But what is that new life. It is Jesus’ life in us. He said, I am the way the truth and the life.

John 5:26 “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

John 6:47-48 “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life.

John 6:54 “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

In the new birth we are united to that Jesus in whom is life, spiritual life, life of the new kingdom, eternal life.

John Calvin wrote: “The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself” (Institutes, III, 1, 1).

Faith in Jesus is awakened in our hearts – see “effective calling”

See testimonies of that awakening in Lewis, Colson, Bunyon.

Faith is the way we experience the new birth. I didn’t say that faith produces the new birth but it IS the way we experience it.

From “What Happens in the New Birth part 2” Piper

“We know that the Bible tells us that our old self was crucified (Romans 6:6), and that we have died with Christ (Colossians 3:3), and we are to “consider ourselves dead” (Romans 6:11), and “put off the old self” (Ephesians 4:22). But none of that means the same human being is not in view throughout life. It means that there was an old nature, an old character, or principle, or bent, that needs to be done away with.

So the way to think about your new heart, new spirit, or new nature is that it is still you and so needs to be forgiven and cleansed—that’s the point of the referring to water. My guilt must be washed away. Cleansing with water is a picture of that. Jeremiah 33:8 puts it like this: “I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.” So the person that we are—that continues to exist—must be forgiven, and the guilt washed away.