

# EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



## From My Window

Twice in the last month, I was asked the same question: “When you are hurting, what do you do?” Though there is no immediate recipe for healing emotional wounds, I shared my own habit of reviewing Psalm 23:5, and the three soothing phrases of this verse. First, the good Shepherd prepares “a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” The NET states, “the imagery is probably the royal banquet.” In the face of “enemies,” the sheep enjoy splendid nourishment without disturbance. The enemy does not go away, but the sheep are satisfied by the Shepherd. Second, “You anoint my head with oil.” While turmoil may reign, the relationship with the Shepherd is tender and refreshing. Third, “my cup is overflowing.” The heart of one who trusts the Shepherd finds an abundance of grace and peace. Life is hard and trials are painful, but our Shepherd is more than capable to sooth the aching soul—trust him!



## Introducing AlumniFire

VBTS is excited to announce that we have partnered with AlumniFire. This new platform will allow alumni and students to connect with one another and with the seminary. It will also serve as our primary platform for listing ministry and job opportunities for both students and alumni.

In addition to its job board, the AlumniFire interface features a discussion feed for alumni/student interaction, a tagging system to indicate the services members offer (pastoral mentorship, academic advice, etc.), and a directory to search for alumni in specific geographic areas.

The board and administration of VBTS hope that this tool will foster a strong community among graduates (and students) while also providing a quality method for connecting interested individuals with new ministry opportunities that frequently become available.

In order to enroll in the VBTS AlumniFire portal, please visit <https://vbts.alumnifire.com/> and sign up using either your email or social media (Facebook or LinkedIn) profile. Those who enroll using a vbts.edu e-mail will be automatically approved.

If you have any questions or feedback, please email Scott Rosen (srosen@vbts.edu).

## Do you properly understand Romans six?

**Understanding Romans 6 is no easy task.** Pastor Martyn Lloyd-Jones recalls: “One Sunday evening at the close of a service at Westminster Chapel, somewhere about 1943, a certain well-known preacher came into my vestry and said to me: ‘When are you going to preach a series of expository sermons on the Epistle to the Romans?’ I answered immediately: ‘When I have really understood chapter 6’” (*Romans Chapter 6*, xi). Though we smile at the humility of this gifted preacher, his words express our challenge: Do we properly understand Rom. 6? To help you, let me give four insights into this chapter.

**First, Paul ties chapter 6 to the previous chapter with his opening question** (v. 1): “Should we persist in “the sin” so that grace may increase?” In review (5:12-21), Paul placed the collective consequence of Adam’s transgression side-by-side with the universal effectiveness of God’s free gift of righteousness (v. 17). On one hand, all are counted sinners because of Adam’s sin and bear its consequence of death (v. 12), but on the other hand, all who receive God’s free gift of grace in Christ are counted righteous (v. 19). In effect, there are two spheres in which all humanity finds itself, those who live under the domain of sin and death, and those who live under the reign of grace and righteousness (v. 21). Now, note Paul’s opening question and his usage of the definite noun, “the sin.” His grammar highlights “the sin” of Adam, and he asks: Should believers act as if they are still confined to sin’s domain to display the superior strength of grace? The question expects the reader to deeply think upon his grace status.

**Second, Paul emphatically answers his question, but not the way the reader expects** (v. 2). Paul answers his question with a strong negation, “By no means!”, and with a follow-up question: “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” The force of this question cannot be missed, “how can *we who died to sin* still live in it?” Paul uses the verb “to die” because it characterizes the new sphere of grace in which the justified sinner now lives. Upon accepting God’s free gift, every believer is spiritually repositioned by God into the domain of grace, and Paul cannot imagine anyone routinely acting as if he or she is *still* under sin’s reign. For Paul, our “death to sin” took place the moment we were removed from sin’s tyranny and placed into grace, and he uses the rest of the chapter to develop what this means.

**Third, “death to sin” is the judicial result of one being baptized into Christ—his death, burial, and resurrection** (vv. 3-5). The dominant feature of Rom. 6 is the believer’s union with Christ. Paul states the means by which a justified sinner is incorporated into Christ is “through baptism” (v. 4). The hot button question is: What does Paul mean by “baptism?” Some such as Doug Moo assert that our participation in Christ is mediated through water baptism (*Romans*, 359). Two matters cast doubt upon such thinking: (1) such a view implies justification by faith is incomplete until water baptism, and (2) the verb “to baptize” used twice in v. 3 points to God as the subject of the action (“divine passives”). It is best to either view this term typologically as God’s action to identify the justified sinner with Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 10:2, “baptized into Moses”), or to view it as Lloyd-Jones believed—the baptism of the Spirit which the Father had promised (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 11:15-17). Either way, being placed “in Christ” is the result of a sinner receiving God’s free gift, not the action of being dipped into water.

**Finally, “death to sin” has the practical result of one becoming a slave to righteousness** (v. 18). Being “in Christ” sets us free from sin to become slaves of God producing the Spirit’s holy fruit (v. 22). Paul’s slavery language distinctly expresses his ideal for a Christian, and he began this letter by declaring that he too is “a slave of Jesus” (1:1). Therefore, to properly grasp Rom. 6, the reader must stay within Paul’s context of what it means to be incorporated into Christ and live in the sphere of righteousness. Such thinking will produce in the believer a “walk in newness of life” (v. 4).