



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



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From My Window

Unlike most precious stones, which are found in rocks, pearls are found in shelled mollusks - like the oyster. The formation of a pearl is the result of some microscopic irritant which becomes trapped inside the shell. To protect itself, the oyster creates a pearl sac to seal off the irritant and protect itself from further injury. It secretes one layer after another of calcium carbonate (CaCO_3) around the alien object or parasite. After wrapping the sac with many protective layers, a small "pearl" is uniquely formed. Incredibly, the irritant of the oyster proves to be the riches of the finder! What a beautiful illustration this is for believers facing tribulation. The Apostle Paul writes (Rom. 5:3-5) that each tribulation is designed by God to produce in you patience, character, and hope. In clear terms, each trial in your life will prove to be of great worth - so don't shy from suffering!



The 2016 Graduates with the Faculty on May 1, 2016

The 2016 Graduates in Spotlight

On May 1st, Virginia Beach Theological Seminary celebrated its 17th annual Commencement Service at Colonial Baptist Church. Our graduates are missionally minded and exude a pioneering spirit. Aaron Bennett is ministering in the college town of Alfred, New York; Jesse Krystowiak (pastor), Nate Bauers (pastor), and Bryan Eck (deacon), are serving in three Virginian cities (Lexington, Chesapeake, and Carrollton); Ian Carton is leaving in June to join a team to plant a new church in Bowie, Maryland; and Caleb Burdett just began language school three months ago in Spain (joining with another VBTS graduate, Jonathan Romaine). Please join the VBTS board, faculty, and staff in praying for these qualified and gifted men, and their families, as they faithfully labor for Jesus Christ in their ministry locations.

93 golfers
participated
in the VBTS
Golf Classic
on April 28





Truth for the Agora: “but I am of the flesh, sold under sin” Rom. 7:14

Paul uses a curious phrase in Romans 7:14: “but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.” Paul’s words in Chapter 7 have sparked centuries of debate and countless articles. By one count, at least seven different interpretations are being suggested today. So, how do I properly absorb this expression of Paul? Is there any hope of understanding what Paul means by this unusual combination of nine English words? Let me help you think through the context of these “troubling words” and find encouragement for your heart.

First, Paul is making a personal observation, “I am of the flesh.” Paul is helping the reader understand that his fleshly nature did not change at his conversion; he is still flesh. To put it another way, when Paul was saved on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19), he was not unhooked from Adam’s race with all its insipid passions and fleshly desires. Now, after 20 years of being a Christian, Paul soberly declares, “sin dwells within me” (7:17, 20).

Second, Paul makes this personal observation by using the literary combination of a personal pronoun (*ego*) and a present tense verb (*eimi*): “I am.” This “emphatic present” dominates the rest of his paragraph (vv. 14-25), and he will use present tense verbs 36 times. John Stott observes that in the previous paragraph (vv. 7-13), Paul wrote of “his past, pre-conversion experience. But now suddenly his verbs are in the present tense.” Clearly, Paul is using himself (“I”) as the prime example for his readers that he is currently living as one “sold under sin.”

Third, the phrase “sold under sin” is a reference to the consequence of Adam’s original sin in Eden (5:12). The unique Pauline verb is better translated “*having been sold*” (perfect passive participle) followed by the preposition and an articular noun, “*under the sin.*” This suggests that the occasion for Paul’s sinful constitution was his inherited reality from Adam’s original sin, which Paul already explained in 5:12-19. Conversion did not erase Adam’s anarchical flesh within Paul, but it dethroned it (5:15; 6:14; 7:6; 8:2). To help us understand, Paul uses slavery imagery to compare one’s unconverted life with his present life: *you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God* (6:22). Paul reasoned: Though sin remains within the believer, it no longer enslaves him (6:17; 8:15).

Finally, when 7:14 is viewed within its larger context of Chapters 5-8, the “troubling words” find relief – in three ways. *First*, Paul’s present physical condition was not to be his final state. Though he lives in a “body of sin” (6:6), which he describes as a “body of death” (7:24), he eagerly waits for the future “redemption of his body” (8:23). This is Paul’s celebrated hope (8:24-25). *Second*, while he remains in this “mortal body” (8:11), the Spirit indwells and empowers him so that the immoral deeds of his past are now “put to death” (8:12-13). *Third*, we conclude with Cranfield that *only* when the reader holds Chapters 5-8 as a single unit will he fully solve “the obvious tension” found in 7:14. Each Christian lives with “two contemporaneous realities” – the indwelling Spirit and his sinful flesh. However, because “grace reigns” (5:21), the believer lives “under grace” (6:14) and is now free “to obey from the heart” (6:17) the instructions of the Spirit of God (7:6; 8:14). *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (7:25)!