

July 29, 2007 by Steve Brandon



# Not Our Ways: Sanctification is Slow

## Romans 7:14-25

1. Sanctification is a War.
2. Sanctification in Us.
3. Sanctification in Others.

In the late 1400's several political events converged which made passage from Europe to China and India more difficult for the Europeans. First of all Constantinople fell to the Muslims in 1453. This impeded the land rout to Asia. Also, the Ottoman conquest of Egypt around the same time made passage through the Red Sea more difficult as well. In order to trade with those in China and India, the Europeans were pushed to travel around the southern border of Africa to Asia.

However Christopher Columbus had a different idea. He had developed a plan to travel to the Indies by traveling east instead of traveling west across the "Ocean Sea" which we know as "the Atlantic." Contrary to many modern day myths very few if any believed that the earth was flat. Europeans knew full well that you could sail west to reach the east. However obtaining funding for an exploratory trip was very difficult because most of the scholars of the day accepted Ptolemy's claim that the land mass of Europe, Africa, and Asia extended 180 degrees around the globe, exactly half-way. This meant that to sail across the globe across the "Ocean Sea" would require a trip of 12,000 miles. No ship in the days of Columbus was able to carry enough food and fresh water to make such a trip.

Columbus had different ideas about these things. He didn't accept the commonly held reasoning of the day that Ptolemy had put forth years earlier in the first several centuries. Rather, he believed the calculations of Marinus of Tyre who lived near the time of Ptolemy. He estimated that the land mass of Europe, Africa, and Asia extended a full 225 degrees around the globe (or almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  the way around the globe). This left only 135 degrees of water to navigate. Furthermore through some other assumptions Columbus calculated the circumference of the world to be only 15,000 miles rather than the true circumference of 25,000 miles which made a trip west seem even shorter.

As Columbus tried to raise funds to allow a trip west to China and India he met with real resistance because people believed his calculations to be in error. He appeared before King John II of Portugal on two separate occasions with a proposal to sail into the Atlantic in search of a western route to the Orient. Both times his proposal was rejected mostly due to the king's counselors who considered the proposed route of Columbus to be too short to reach the shores of India. Columbus spoke with investors in other nations, but couldn't find anyone willing to support him in his wild-sounding endeavors. He even sent his brother to speak with King Henry VII of England.

Finally he convinced King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to help him in his quest even though they never really expected Columbus to return. So on the evening of August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus departed from Palos, Spain with three ships: the Nifia, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Five weeks later on October 12, 1492 land was spotted. It turned out to be an island in the Bahamas which Columbus named San Salvador. He then sailed on to Cuba and the Northern coast of Hispaniola. Upon returning back home Christopher Columbus was convinced that he had reached Asia and an Island off the coast of China.

Over the course of the next 20 years Christopher Columbus made three other voyages across the Atlantic. Each time he explored a bit more of the land. Yet to his dying day Christopher Columbus never knew that he had discovered the new world. He remained convinced until his dying breath that his adventures had taken him to the eastern shores of Asia. [\[1\]](#)

The life of Christopher Columbus is a perfect illustration of our topical sermon series that I have preached this summer entitled "Not Our Ways." For these past seven weeks it has been my aim to demonstrate to you some of the various ways in which God has created our world differently than we would have thought to create a world if we were God). Christopher Columbus was wrong about many things. Apart from the Biblical revelation we have received we might well be like Christopher Columbus trusting in our own perception of reality and ultimately being deceived of the true reality that is around us until our dying day. God has made a world that is different than we would naturally think.

This is my eighth and final sermon in our series this summer. I have derived each of the topics of these sermons from a sermon preached by Edward Payson entitled "God's Ways Above Men's." In the heart of Payson's message he gave eight examples of ways in which God has created a world differently that we might have created it.

First, God created a world in which evil plays a crucial role.

Second, God created a world in which God can transfer righteousness and guilt from one person to another.

Third, God created a world in which He would offer salvation to fallen men but not offer salvation to fallen angels.

Fourth, God created a world in which the Savior would come humbly without pomp and circumstance.

Fifth, God created a world in which He would use weak, frail, and unattractive people to spread His message rather than superstars.

Sixth, God created a world in which few would be saved instead of many.

In message seven we looked at how God created a world in which salvation comes by grace, not by our works.

Finally in this message we will look at how God created a world in which the process of sanctification in His people is slow.

These eight observations are far from exhaustive. There are many, many ways in which God's ways of doing things are different from ours. Before I preached any of my sermons this summer I received an email from one in our congregation who wrote, ...

Hi Steve,

Been looking forward to your summer topical series on God's Ways Are Not Mans' Ways since you mentioned it. I'm sure it promises to be very good. I've been thinking of this subject for awhile as it relates to church structure and growth and all of the things we need to keep in mind regarding the differences between the economy of God and Man. Things like:

The weak shall be strong.  
The last shall be first.  
To live we must die.  
To do we must be.  
The poor shall be rich (and visa versa).  
To lead we must serve.  
To know we must be known.  
God will glory in the few not the multitude.

Thanks!" [\[2\]](#)

I suppose we could come up with many more ways in which God's ways are not our ways. However we will stop at these eight. I trust they will suffice for you to see that you ought not to merely trust in your own logic regarding the ways of God. He is far above us and beyond us. We simply need to trust Him.

Well, as I mentioned already we will look at the issue of our sanctification. Particularly we will look at how God has created a world in which the process of our sanctification is a slow process. Once again as I have done every week I will quote from Edward Payson regarding these things. Payson wrote, ...

God's thoughts and ways are not as ours respecting the best methods of dealing with his people, and carrying on the work of grace in their souls after it is begun. When God delivered his people from Egyptian bondage, if he had led them by the nearest and most direct way to Canaan, they might have reached it in a very few days; and had they been consulted, they would probably have thought the nearest way the best. But God thought otherwise. So when God converts his people from sin to holiness, he could, if he pleased, render them perfectly holy at once; and they are often ready to imagine, that this would be much the better way, both for his glory and their own good. But instead of adopting this method, he grants them, at first, but small degrees of grace, and increases it in a very slow and gradual manner. He leads them round for many years, through a wilderness beset with temptations, trials and sufferings, with a view to humble them, prove them, and show them all that is in their hearts. By the discoveries which they make of their own weakness, ignorance and propensity to sin, their pride is humbled; their self-confidence destroyed; their patience, meekness and candor are increased; the Savior, and his method of salvation rendered more precious, and all ground for boasting forever excluded. [\[3\]](#)

Edward Payson points out that God's purpose in redeeming us from our sins through Christ is to bring us into a better state of being. As sinful creatures we suffer and groan and encounter difficulties in this life. When we experience forgiveness of sins it is good for us. Yet it will be better when we are free of sin never to sin again. In addition to this, when we reach a state in which we never sin, our fellowship with God will be perfect and God will be glorified in our worship of Him.

Furthermore, in redeeming us it's good for God as well. When we are redeemed from our sin we are made to be worshipers of God. As such we bring great glory to God. And then when we are perfected in heaven some day, the Lord will receive great glory as we will worship Him in total purity. We will magnify His grace (as is detailed in the previous message).

But, God's ways are not our ways. When God redeemed us from our sin He didn't make us perfectly holy at once. He could have done so, but He chose not to. Rather, God has delayed our ultimate perfection. In so doing God has also delayed our full worship of Him. God has allowed us to continue in a state of constant struggle with our sin.

If we have been consulted I'm sure that we would have counseled God to make those who believe in Him perfectly holy and blameless in an instant rather than force them to engage in a life-long painful struggle with sin. We could come up with all sorts of arguments. It would be better for us in that our pain, sorrow, struggle, and groaning would be reduced greatly. It would be better for Him because our worship would be entirely pleasing to Him. However, God, in His infinite wisdom has chosen to allow us as His people to struggle in our sin until the day that we die or Christ returns, whichever comes first. This is definitely not the way that we would choose to have things.

I remember hearing a story from a friend of mine who was training for missions work in a remote area of the world. He was training alongside some men from Russia who were doing the same. In the course of their training they were going to erect a building from scratch so that all involved might learn how to build in the remote areas where they were headed. So they began to dig the foundation by hand. After a bit of digging in the hard soil a Russian man protested saying, "In Russia we have machines that can do this digging!" He didn't want the hard way. I don't blame him. I'm sure that you are the same way. When given the option, I'm sure that you place your dishes in the dishwasher rather than washing them by hand in the sink. You probably put your clothes in a washing machine rather than using a washboard. Most of you would choose to use a gas powered mower rather than using a sickle. You drive rather than walk.

When you drive to church which of you say, "Driving in the car to church this morning is too easy. I want a struggle. I'm going to walk to church today. I live seven miles away so it will take me almost two hours but I'm always up to the challenge. I'm walking to church today." None of you say that. Instead you choose to drive in the convenience of your climate controlled automobile. But, God has intentionally made our lives difficult by not yet delivering us completely from our sin.

At this time please refer to Romans, chapter 7. I will focus on verses 14 through 25 in which Paul details the struggle that all of us who believe in Christ face on a daily basis. These words will form the basis of my first point.

## 1. Sanctification is a War.

Before introducing our text, I first want to mention that there are some who believe that these words are written by Paul describing his state as a non-Christian, rather than describing his state as a Christian. Those who believe this do so primarily because they find difficulty in reconciling Paul's words in Romans 7 with Paul's words in Romans 6 and Romans 8. In Romans 7 Paul presents himself as being engaged in a struggle with sin. However in Romans 6 and Romans 8 Paul describes the victorious life in which we are "freed from sin" (Rom. 6:7) and in which we are "set free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2). So they say that Paul must be describing his former life in Romans 7 because Christians are free from sin.

I believe that these people are wrong. I believe that Paul is talking about his present experience as a believer in Christ. Space and time does not permit me to delve into all of the arguments one way or another. However let me simply say that reading Romans 7 as the testimony of a Christian in his struggle with sin is the easiest and most natural way to read the text. In the first thirteen verses of this chapter Paul gave his testimony of how the law convicted him of sin. Everything he said there was in the past tense. Conversely beginning in verse 14 Paul shifts to the present tense which I believe is indicative that Paul wants his readers to be aware that these are the sorts of things that are going on in his life as a mature believer in Christ.

As you read through these verses I want you to think about your own life in order to see if these words ring true in your experience of the fight that you go through in your progressive sanctification. I trust that they will. This is the experience of every believer in Jesus Christ. If you find that your words don't resonate in these words, it may be that you aren't a Christian, because you don't have an awareness of your own sinfulness.

### Romans 7:14-25

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Although the flow of these words is difficult to follow, the overall meaning of them is not. Paul is clearly putting forth here the idea that his battle with sin rages on!

On the one hand Paul desperately wants to do right! He calls the law "spiritual" (verse 14). "The willing [to do good] is present in me" (verse 18). He says that he "wants to do good" (verse 21). He says, "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man" (verse 22). Yet on the other hand Paul finds this to be an incredible battle in doing what is right! He says, "I am not practicing what I would like to do" (verse 15). "I am doing the very thing I hate" (verse 15). "I do the very thing I do not want to do" (verse 16). "the doing of good is not [in me]" (verse 18). "I practice the very evil that I do not want." (verse 19). "[I am] a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (verse 23).

So great is the struggle that Paul calls it a "war" going on within the members of his body (verse 23). *Sanctification is a War.*

When you look elsewhere in the Bible you will find that there are two parties at war in your body: the Spirit and the flesh. The flesh is a term that represents your sinful self. It is not merely your body. It also includes your mind and your desires and your sinful cravings. As a believer in Christ, you also have the Holy Spirit within you. And so there is this war that rages within you. Your flesh is pulling you to do one thing. The Spirit of God within you is pulling you to do another thing.

In Galatians 5:17 Paul put it this way, "The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another so that you may not do the things that you please." This is the war that takes place within every Christian. There is a desire to do good. But we see that we fail in doing so many times. Do you know what I'm talking about? Have you experienced these things?

Perhaps you have even felt the despair that Paul expressed in verse 24: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (verse 24). "I have this body that is filled with conflicting desires. Oh, I want to serve the Lord. Oh, I want to walk in purity before Him! But, I find it so difficult at times. I wish that I could be freed from the sinful longing that I experience in my flesh. I wish that I were free to do right all the time!"

Indeed there will be a day when you are free. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). When those who believe in Jesus

actually see Him (either in His return or in our death), it will have a transforming impact upon our lives. We will receive a new body. Now we do not know a whole lot about this body we will receive. We know that it is different and sinless. In 1 Corinthians 15 we read about how it is different than our current bodies: "It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:42-44). However until we receive our spiritual body we will continue to live a life of battling sin in our members.

Please notice Paul's perspective of this war. He expressed his hatred of it. He was not content in his sin in any way. He was not merely resigned to saying, "Oh well, I guess I'll never be able to conquer my sin. I know that I forgiven by His grace. I'll just give into it." (See Romans 6:1-2). No, that is not his attitude at all. He wants deliverance. He knows that someday through Christ he will get his deliverance. This is the point of verse 25: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" This verse leads into chapter 8, verse 1, in which Paul wondrously declares, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Paul knows that the way out of the conflict that wages within his soul is through Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice upon the cross. It is because Jesus bore our sin in His body on the cross that we won't face the condemnation that is due to us. Rather we will go free! No more fighting! No more conflict! No more sinning! Until that time it's going to be a war within.

When John Bunyan described the Christian life he described it as a long difficult journey that a pilgrim makes. Christian was hassled by roaring lions. Christian had to climb the hill of difficulty and descend through the valley of the shadow of death. Christian had to fight Apollyon. Christian had to face the temptations and ridicule of those in Vanity Fair. Christian was captured by Giant Despair and brought to Doubting Castle. Throughout his entire journey Christian faced various people who sought to persuade them from his path. Talkative tried to seduce him into a religion of words. Demas called them to come to the Hill called Lucre. Vain-confidence sought to have them trust in themselves. Mr. Turn-away tried to get them to turn back. Mr. Atheist tried to persuade them that the Celestial City didn't exist. These are but a few of the difficulties that Christian faced along his way to the Celestial City and all of them came after he came to Calvary where his burden fell off his shoulders and rolled into the empty tomb never to be seen again. In other words Christian faces all of these difficulties *after* receiving the forgiveness of sins! God has chosen to allow us to struggle with sin and temptation throughout all our days.

The point of my message is that God has intentionally made our way to heaven be a long hard road. He has intentionally chosen for us to face the difficulties of the flesh. We would not have chosen it but God has.

We can easily ask ourselves, "Why? Why has God made is so hard for us?" John Newton wrote a great hymn addressing why it is so:

"I asked the Lord that I might grow  
In faith and love and every grace,  
Might more of his salvation know  
And seek more earnestly his face.

'Twas he who taught me thus to pray  
And he, I trust, has answered prayer.  
But it has been in such a way  
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favored hour  
At once he'd answer my request,  
And by his love's constraining power  
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this, he made me feel  
The hidden evils of my heart,  
And let the angry powers of hell  
Assault my soul in every part.

'Lord, why is this?' I trembling cried,  
'Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?'  
'Tis in this way,' the Lord replied,  
'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'

'These inward trials I employ  
From self and pride to set thee free  
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,  
That thou mayest seek they all in me.'<sup>[4]</sup>

In other words, God lets us struggle in our sin to teach us to trust Him more and more, as we are always forced back to Him for help in overcoming our sin. Just think with me what would happen if we were free from all struggle with sin. We may easily fall away from trusting God on a daily basis. But, the reality is that we need to depend upon Him everyday to fight this war.

Indeed, *Sanctification is a War*. Are you willing to fight the war? In our country in order to fight in a war you need to sign up. You need to go down to the local military recruiters office and tell them that you would like to sign up for the military. (The days of the draft in our country are in the past.) Regarding the war in the members of your body you signed up when you chose to follow Christ. You have signed up for war and you can't get out. Are you willing to fight the war? You need to be ready. John Owen once wrote, "The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin"<sup>[5]</sup> This ought to be the chief pursuit all of our days. Do you know how to fight? How to fight the war comes in my next point:

## 2. Sanctification in Us.

With this point I want to give you some very practical help regarding your own sanctification. This is such a huge topic that we can't hope to be exhaustive this morning into the battle that all of us face. I simply want to pull out some observations from our text before us. First of all know that ...

### A. Willpower isn't enough.

If anything ought to be clear from Romans 7 it ought to be this. It is not enough to simply make a resolve with your heart to stop sinning and think that you can achieve your results. Throughout this passage Paul says that he's trying to stop sinning but all of his efforts are falling flat on the ground. Verse 15 states, "I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." Verse 18 reads, "The willing is present in me, but the doing of good is not." In verse 19, Paul writes, "For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want." Your battle with the flesh is bigger than simply saying, "I'm not going to sin anymore."

Picture a running back who really wants to get into the end zone to score six points for his team. He has told the coach, "Coach, give me the ball, I want to score a touchdown." He has told his teammates during the ride to the stadium, "I really want to score a touchdown in today's game." In the midst of the game the running back is in the huddle telling his teammates, "I can't tell you guys how badly I want this touchdown. I've been dreaming about it for a year now." The play is called and the quarterback hands him the ball. He charges ahead, behind his offensive line, toward the end zone. After a few yards he encounters a problem: the other team. Eleven guys are coming after him trying to tackle him. Once two or three of them have a hold of his arms and legs and they begin to pull him down to the ground. No amount of willpower is going to allow him to overpower the defensive line and linebackers who are holding on to him. He's going down. It's like this with our battle with the flesh. Willpower alone isn't going to score a touchdown. Neither will a resolve of your heart end in a sinless life. You need more than willpower.

Don't get me wrong. Without willpower you will be powerless in your attempts to conquer sin in your life. Yet willpower alone will not do the job. *Willpower isn't enough.* This brings me to my second piece of counsel from this passage:

### B. Your enemy is strong.

This is a bit of a corollary to my first point. This is the reason why your willpower isn't enough: your enemy is strong. Your enemy in this case is your flesh. In verse 14 we have a statement describing the state of your flesh. It says there that your flesh is "sold into bondage to sin." This means that your flesh has made an agreement with sin. It wants to sin every bit as bad as you want to live righteously. As we can see throughout this passage the flesh often gets the best of you because of the strength of your flesh.

We see Paul describing the flesh again in verse 18: "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." Your enemy is completely sold out to his cause. Again if we pick up on the football analogy your flesh has been working hard all summer long. He has been in the weight room bulking up every day and when you face him on the football field he is fully ready to engage you in battle. He is strong and he wants you to prevent you from scoring a touchdown.

So slow is the pull of our flesh. It opposes your every desire for righteousness. Your flesh is big and strong and sold out to defeating you in these matters. Your flesh will muster all of its power and ability to cause you to lose your war with sin.

Now here is the good news:

### C. Christ is stronger than the flesh.

This comes as we flow into chapter 8. Verse 2 reads, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." There is a freedom in Christ that we no longer have to obey the lusts of the flesh. Where we were once bound by the flesh we are now, through Christ, free. Verses 3 and 4 detail the freedom that Christ has purchased for us. Our freedom from sin doesn't come through law keeping. Rather our freedom from sin comes through trusting in the Spirit empowering us to live righteously. Now, observe what verses 5 and 6 present, "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." These are words of hope. As we trust in Christ to empower us to have the victory we can succeed.

Let me take you back once more to the football illustration. The quarterback hands you the football and you are making efforts to score a touchdown. Your enemy is strong but you have something else. You have the power of the Spirit. You might liken that to your offensive line. The greatest running backs know how to trust their blockers. They know how to be patient and wait for the blockers to create the hole to run through where they won't be tackled. As you trust the Spirit your blockers in front of you gain strength. They have the ability to defeat your sinful opponent. With respect to sin you have the power to overcome sin through the strength of the Spirit of Christ working within you.

### D. You feed your own flesh.

The war you battle is within you. It's your mind against your flesh. It's the things that you want to do against the things that your sinful desires within you want to do. James taught that people are drawn away and enticed by their own lusts (James 1:13-14). The battle is within you! You can choose to feed your own flesh thereby making it stronger or you can choose to starve your own flesh thereby making it weaker.

Once again returning to our football illustration let's think about your enemy on defense. It's summertime during the off season and your enemies want to get into the weight room to get stronger but you have the key to the weight room. You can open the door and let them in and allow them to lift their weights so that they become stronger or you can keep the door locked so that they can't get into the weight room. You don't have to let them in.

Also it just so happens that the defenders come to your house to eat. You can choose to place before them pastas and fruits and meat and allow them to get strong or you can refuse to feed them when they come to your table. They might be big and strong and try to intimidate you. They might demand food. They might threaten you with harm if you don't feed them. But, you don't have to feed them.

If you stand firm and don't feed them, think about what happens in the fall when games begin. Your competition will be against skinny, starved defensive players, which will make scoring a touchdown easier. It won't be automatic, because they will still be playing football, trying to prevent you from scoring. But, your opportunities for success will be greater as your enemy is ill prepared to play.

Conversely if you have let them into the weight room and have feed them all off season you will have to play against giants. Your chance of victory will be remote. [\[6\]](#)

This is how the flesh works. As we expose our flesh to sinful activities and sinful thoughts the flesh only gets stronger and stronger and stronger. Then as you engage in your sinful activities your flesh likes it and wants more and more and more and your flesh is never satisfied. It will want more. You give it a little and it wants more. You give it more and it wants even more still.

Alcoholics didn't start out drinking a 12 pack each night. They started small with only a few drinks and a small buzz but the flesh wasn't fully satisfied. It wanted a bigger buzz. Once it got more it wanted something more and more and more. That's how the flesh works.

If you starve the flesh it never knows what it's missing or it may forget what it's missing. So your goal in fighting the flesh is to starve your flesh. You stay away from the activities that you know will feed your flesh. Stay away from the books and magazines and television shows and internet sites and friends that pull you into sin. In contrast fill your days with righteous thought and activities. That's what Bible reading and prayer are about. They direct your focus toward God. That's what genuinely fulfilling fellowship is about. They fulfill your relational needs with healthy relationships. When you have godly Christian friends the world isn't quite so attractive anymore. Go to church and go to Bible studies even when you don't fully feel like it because it will help you starve the flesh.

As you starve the flesh, it will make your victory over sin to be easier and easier. The war will always be there as long as you live in your sinful body. However, with a bit of effort, you can weaken your enemy.

I close with one final point:

### 3. Sanctification in Others.

With this point I simply want to push you to think about the sanctification process as it relates to other people. The sanctification process is slow. The sanctification process is hard, with many ups and downs. Those of you who are engaged in the battle know how hard it is for you personally.

So, as you deal with others who are in the war against sin, you ought to be patient with them. Don't expect others to conquer their sin instantly.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on July 29, 2007 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] I retrieved much of my information on Christopher Columbus from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher\\_Columbus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Columbus).

[2] Used by permission.

[3] Edward Payson, "God's Ways Above Men's." See <http://www.rvbc.cc/ResourceLibrary/PaysonGodsWays/PaysonGodsWays.htm>.

[4] John Newton, Olney Hymns, #36. See [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/newton/olneyhymns.h3\\_36.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/newton/olneyhymns.h3_36.html).

[5] John Owen, *Temptation and Sin*, p. 7.

[6] The seed of this football illustration came from a series of cartoons drawn by Joshua Harris, senior pastor of [Covenant Life Church](#), Gaithersburg, Maryland. I found these cartoons to be helpful in understanding the process of battling with sin. These cartoons can be viewed here: <http://www.rvbc.cc/ResourceLibrary/FeedingTheFlesh/FeedingTheFlesh.htm>.