

Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate
by Jerry Bridges

Session 1: Facing Up to the Truth (Ch. 1-3)

"We see and bemoan the flagrant sins of our culture, and we're even quick to point out the sins of our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we are often blind to the more subtle sins that we tolerate in our own lives – those I call 'respectable' sins." Jerry Bridges

Key Verse: "Sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4)

► **Chapter 1: Ordinary Saints**

1. Church at Corinth: Although messed up theologically and morally, Paul addressed them as "saints" (1 Cor 1:2 and 2 Cor 1:1; p. 11).
2. Definition of Saint (*hagios*): "one who is separated unto God" or "one who is sanctified" (p. 12).
3. State of Being: We don't become saints by our actions. "We are made saints by the immediate supernatural action of the Holy Spirit alone who works this change deep within our inner being so that we do, in fact, become new creations in Christ" (see 2 Cor 5:17; p. 14).
4. Inward Battle: Guerrilla warfare between the flesh and spirit is fought daily in the heart of every Christian (Gal 5:17; p. 15).
5. Spiritual Growth: Change is not instantaneous and absolute but is rather progressive over time and never complete in this life. "However, the awareness of this internal struggle with sin should never be used as an excuse for sinful behavior. Rather, we should always keep in mind that we are saints called to live a life that is set apart for God" (p. 15).
6. Military Illustration: "Just as 'conduct unbecoming an officer' covers a wide range of misconduct, so the word *sin* covers a wide range of misbehavior. It covers everything from gossip to adultery, from impatience to murder. Obviously, there are degrees to seriousness of sin. But in the final analysis, sin is sin. It is conduct unbecoming a saint," (p. 16).
7. You are a saint, so live like it.

► **Chapter 2: The Disappearance of Sin**

1. Disappearance: The whole idea of sin has virtually disappeared from our culture and has been softened to accommodate modern sensibilities (p. 18-19).
2. Deflection: In conservative, evangelical churches, the idea of sin has not disappeared, but has been "*deflected* to those outside our circles who commit flagrant sins such as abortion, homosexuality, and murder, or the notorious white-collar crimes of high-level corporate executives. It's easy for us to condemn those obvious sins while virtually ignoring our own sins of gossip, pride, envy, bitterness, and lust, or even our lack of those gracious qualities that Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22; p. 19).
3. Humility & Repentance: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," (Prayer of tax collector in Luke 18:13, p. 19).

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4. All Sin is Serious: “Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for [is guilty of] all of it” (James 2:10).
“That Scripture is difficult for us to understand because we think in terms of individual laws and their respective penalties. But God’s law is seamless. The Bible speaks not of God’s *laws*, as if many of them, but of God’s *law* as a single whole . . . The truth is, all sin is serious because all sin is a breaking of God’s law” (p. 20).
5. Spectrum of Personal Awareness: The “paradox is that those whose lives most reflect the fruit of the Spirit are usually those who are most keenly aware of and groan inwardly over these so-called acceptable sins in their own lives. But there is also a vast multitude who are quite judgmental toward the grosser sins of society but who seem pridefully unaware of their own personal sins. And a lot of us live somewhere in between. But the point is, all of our sin, wherever we may be on the spectrum of personal awareness of it in our lives, is reprehensible in the sight of God and deserving of His judgment” (p. 22).

► **Chapter 3: The Malignancy of Sin**

1. Comparison to Cancer: “Sin is a spiritual and moral malignancy. Left unchecked, it can spread throughout our entire inner being and contaminate every area of our lives. Even worse, it often will ‘metastasize’ from us into the lives of other believers around us . . . Our attitudes, words, and actions, and oftentimes even our private unspoken thoughts, tend to have an effect on those around us” (p. 23).
2. Sinful Nature: Sin is much more than “wrong actions, unkind words, or even those evil thoughts that we never express. Sin is a principle or moral force in our heart, our inner being . . . The apostle Paul calls this principle the *flesh* or *sinful nature*” (see Rom 7:8-11; Gal 5:17; p. 24).
3. Negativity of Sin: Ralph Venning in *The Sinfulness of Sin* says that sin is “vile, ugly, odious, malignant, pestilent, pernicious, hideous, spiteful, poisonous, virulent, villainous, abominable, and deadly” (p. 26).
 - a. Cosmic Treason: Our sin is “an assault on the majesty and sovereign rule of God” (Isaiah 6:1-8; p. 26-27).
 - b. Despising God’s Law and God Himself (2 Sam 12:9-10; p. 27).
 - c. Grieving God (Eph 4:25-32, p. 27).
 - d. Presuming on His Grace (Eph 1:7; Isa 53:6; Rom 6; p. 28).
 - e. Done Openly in the Presence of God (Ps 139; 1 Cor 4:5; p. 29).

Class Discussion:

For This Week:
Read Chapters 1-6