

• *Two possible losses for the Christian who sins*

1. God can become angry with his people

• *It is not true to say that when we are saved everything is settled for ever and the Christian's reward is guaranteed*

• *God does not withdraw his love from his elect*

• *But they may suffer loss at the judgement seat of Christ*

• *Anything which does not please God will be removed and exterminated sooner or later*

2. Three reasons for God's anger when his people sin

If a Christian sins two of the effects of the blood of Christ are in danger of being lost. The daily cleansing and the inheritance-of-reward might be lost and are not being enjoyed at the moment. Such a Christian is setting himself up for the loss of eternal reward at the judgement throne of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 27 continues: *but there is a very fearful prospect of judgement and fiery indignation, which is about to devour the adversaries.*

1. **God can become angry with his people.** Does not God love his people for ever – it might be asked? Yes, he does! But it is quite possible for God to love us and be angry with us at the same time! Do not parents sometimes become angry with what their children have done – even though at the same time they love them? God has no plans to abandon us but ‘the other side’ of the truth is that an unrepentant Christian will face the anger of God. In the judgement day anything that is not pleasing to God will be first punished and then exterminated. No one believes in ‘Once saved always saved’ more than I do! But still the sins of Christians will face fearful chastening. It is not balanced doctrine to say that when we are saved everything is settled for ever and the Christian's **reward** is guaranteed. ‘Justification’ may be settled for ever. He who is justified is glorified. But living relationship with God depends on staying open to his voice. God does not withdraw his love from his elect. It cannot happen to Israel (‘the gifts and calling of God are without repentance’). It could not happen to the royal son of David (‘If his children forsake my law...then I will punish their transgression...but I will not remove from him my steadfast love...I will not violate my covenant’). It cannot happen to the child of God (‘I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand’). But nevertheless Christians suffer for their sins in this life, and they may suffer loss at the judgement seat of Christ. The Lord will judge his people. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. For the Christian sinner there is a very fearful prospect of judgement and fiery indignation. God got angry with Israel and excluded them from ‘entering rest’ (though he did not send them back to Egypt to be unredeemed!). God can become the enemy of his people, in one way, although he still loves them in another way. Sin sets up enmity with God. Anything which does not please God will be removed and exterminated sooner or later ^a.

2. **Hebrews sets forth the reasons for God's anger, when his people sin.** (i) It is despising Jesus. ²⁹*How much worse punishment, do you think, will be considered appropriate for the person who has trampled under foot the Son of God and has treated the blood of the covenant as if it were insignificant and commonplace – the blood by which he was sanctified – and has abused the Spirit of grace?* (ii) It is treating Jesus' blood as unimportant. (iii) It is abusing the grace of God's Holy Spirit. (iv) It is extreme ingratitude. The blood of Christ has sanctified us and yet we are acting as if that had not happened!

3. The punishment will be severe

• The sinning Christian will regret eventually that he did not more energetically work out his salvation with fear and trembling

• The balanced position is to teach both eternal security and the possibility of serious chastening at the hand of God

3. The punishment will be severe. Someone might say, 'As long as I survive and am saved that is all that matters to me'. What foolish talk! Do you have faith in Jesus at all? I do not ask, 'Are you sinning?' I say: 'Are you telling me you have committed your life in faith to the Son of God? You are making me have doubts!' But supposing you are a Christian I reply, 'You might say that now. You will not be saying that when it happens, and God might decide to act at any moment'. ³⁰For we know the One who has said, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay'. And again, 'The Lord will judge his people'. ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God is the living God. When he decides to act in severity, people will weep and wail and gnash their teeth. Even some of the saved will weep and wail when they stand at the judgement seat of Christ. They will indeed come through the fire^a but the loss will be terrible. No doubt God will in some way wipe away every tear from their eyes, but the loss will be eternal, and the honour in glory will be less. It is a great mystery and I do not fully understand it, but one thing is sure. The sinning Christian will regret eventually that he did not more energetically work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

^a 1 Corinth. 3:15

I agree with M.R. De Haan, 'To preach grace, grace, free grace, without the counterbalancing truth of the responsibilities of grace, and the penalty for the believer's sins, and the suffering for our misdeeds here and now, and at the Judgement Seat of Christ, is indeed a dangerous doctrine^b. The **balanced** position, as I see it, is to teach **both** eternal security and the possibility of serious chastening at the hand of God. The way to rebuke the Christian sinner is not to say, 'If you do a thing like that you cannot be saved' (this approach is not found in the New Testament) but to expound Hebrews 10:29–39!

Notes

- a. Psalm 89:30–34; John 10:28; 1 Corinthians 3:15; Hebrews 10:27; 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 8–11.
 b. M.R. De Haan, *Hebrews* (Zondervan, 1959), p. 133.



slices.org.uk

Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations
<p>To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk Details of the availability of <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk</p>		