

Under the rule of Satan

Every soul in a state of sin is under the rule of Satan; under which point these two things must be inquired. First: the reason sin is described as darkness. Second: how every one in such a state appears to be under the devil's rule.

First: The reason sin is described as darkness.

1. Sin may be called darkness, because the spring and common cause of sin in man is darkness.

The external cause [is] Satan, who is the great promoter of it; he is a

cursed spirit, held in chains of darkness. The internal is the blindness and darkness of the soul. We may say when anyone sins, he does he knows not what, as Christ said of his murderers. Did the creature know the true worth of the soul which he now sells for a song, the glorious amiable nature of God and his holy ways, the matchless love of God in Christ, the poisonous nature of sin, and all these, not by a sudden beam darted into the window at a sermon, and gone again like a flash of lightning, but by an abiding light, it would spoil the devil's market. Poor creatures would not readily take this toad into their bosom. Sin goes in a disguise, and so is welcome.

2. It is darkness, because it brings darkness into the soul, and that naturally and judicially.

(1) Sin bring darkness into the soul naturally. There is a noxious quality in sin offensive to the understanding, which is to the soul what the eye and palate are to the body; it discerns of things, and distinguishes true from false, as the eye white from black; it

tries words, as the mouth tastes meats.

Now as there are some things bad for the sight, and others bad for the palate, vitiating it, so that it shall not know sweet from bitter; so here sin besots the creature and makes it injudicious, that he, who could see such a practice absurd and base in others before, when once he hath drunk off this enchanting cup himself — as one that has foredone his understanding — is mad of it himself, not able to see the evil of it, or use his reason against it. Thus Saul, before he had debauched his conscience, thinks the witch worthy of death; but after he had trodden his conscience hard with other foul sins, goes to ask counsel of one himself.

(2) Sin brings darkness into the soul judicially. Such have been threatened, whose ear God hath been trying to open and instruct, and have run out of God's school into the devil's, by rebelling against light, that they shall 'die without knowledge' (*Job. 36:10,12*). What! Should the candle burn waste, when the creature has more mind to play than work?

3. Sin may be called darkness, because it runs into darkness.

Impostors bring in their damnable heresies secretly, like those who sell bad ware. Loath to come to the market, where the standard tries all, [they] put it off in secret. So in moral wickedness, sinners like beasts go out in the night for their prey, loath to be seen, afraid to come where they should be found out.

Nothing more terrible to sinners than [the] light of truth, because their deeds are evil (*John 3:19*). Felix was so nettled with what Paul spake, that he could not sit out the sermon, but flings away in haste, and adjourns the hearing of Paul till a convenient season, but he could never find one.

The sun is not more troublesome in hot countries, than truth is to those who sit under the powerful preaching of it. And therefore as those seldom come abroad in the heat of the day, and when they must, have their devices over their heads to screen them from the sun, so sinners shun as much as may be the preaching of the Word. But if they must go, to keep in with their relations, or for other carnal advantages, they, if

possible, will keep off the power of truth, either by sleeping the sermon away, or prating it away with any foolish imagination which Satan sends to bear them company and chat with them at such a time; or by choosing such a cool preacher to sit under, whose toothless discourse shall rather flatter than trouble, rather tickle their fancy than prick their consciences, and then their sore eyes can look upon the light. [They love truth flourishing, who do not love it when it is confuting.] They dare handle and look on the sword with delight when in a rich scabbard, who would run away to see it drawn.

4. Sin may be called darkness for its uncomfortableness, and that in a threefold respect.

(1) *Darkness is uncomfortable, as it shuts out of all employment.* What could the Egyptians do under the plague of darkness but sit still? and this to an active spirit is trouble enough. Thus in a state of sin man is an unserviceable creature, he can do his God no service acceptably, spoils everything he takes in hand; like one running up and down in a shop when the windows are shut, he does

nothing right. It may be writ on the grave of every sinner, who lives and dies in that state, 'Here lies the man that never did God an hour's work in all his life.'

(2) *Darkness is uncomfortable in point of enjoyment.* Be there never such rare pictures in the room, if dark, who the better? A soul in a state of sin may possess much, but he enjoys nothing; this is a sore evil, and little thought of. One thought of its state of enmity to God, would drop bitterness into every cup; all he has smells of hellfire; and a man at a rich feast would enjoy it sure but little, if he smelt fire, ready to burn his house and himself in it.

(3.) *Darkness is uncomfortable, as it fills with terrors.* Fears in the night are most dreadful; a state of sin is a state of fear. Men that owe much, have no quiet, but when they are asleep, and not then neither, the cares and fears of the day sink so deep, as makes their rest troublesome and unquiet in the night.

The wicked has no peace, but when his conscience sleeps, and that sleeps but brokenly, awaking often with sick fits of terror. When he has most prosperity, he is scared like a

flock of birds in a corn-field, at every piece going off. He eats in fear, and drinks in fear. When afflicted, he expects worse behind, and knows not what this cloud may spread to, and where it may lay him, whether in hell or not, he knows not. And therefore he trembles, as one in the dark, not knowing but his next step may be into the pit.

5. Sin may be called darkness, because it leads to utter darkness.

Utter darkness is darkness to the utmost. Sin in its full height, and wrath in its full heat together; both universal, both eternal. Here is some mixture, peace and trouble, pain and ease; sin and thoughts of repenting, sin and hopes of pardon. There the fire of wrath shall burn without slacking, and sin run parallel with torment; hell-birds are no changelings, their torment makes them sin, and their sin feeds their torment, both unquenchable, one being fuel to another.