

Hilarius Diaconus

by John Gill

John Gill's sermon on Hilarius Diaconus explores the theological implications of predestination and God's grace in salvation.

Scripture: Romans 8:29

Topics: "Predestination", "Divine Grace"

Description

John Gill discusses the theological insights of Hilarius Diaconus regarding predestination, emphasizing that God's foreknowledge is not based on human merit but on His divine grace. He explains that Hilarius believed that God predestines individuals to eternal life based on His own decision to grant them faith and holiness. Gill clarifies that while some are chosen for salvation, others are not, and this distinction is rooted in God's sovereign will. The sermon highlights the importance of understanding predestination as a reflection of God's grace rather than human effort. Ultimately, Gill affirms that salvation is a gift from God, not a result of human works.

Transcript

The

CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH.

Part 4

Chapter 1--Of Predestination

Section 16--Hilarius Diaconus. A.D. 380.

The Commentaries upon the epistles of the apostle Paul, which go under the name of St. Ambrose, are not his. Austin^[1] cites a passage out of them, under the name of Hillary, whom he calls Sanctus Hilarius, Saint Hilary; but this could not be Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, before mentioned, who was earlier, nor Hilary bishop of Arles, who was later, than the author of these commentaries: for whoever he was, he lived in the times of Damascus, bishop of Rome, according to his own words;^[2] wherefore some learned men^[3] have thought him to be Hilary, the deacon of the city of Rome, who adhered to the schism of Lucifer Calaritanus.

This author continually refers such passages of Scripture which speak of predestination and election, to the prescience of God; nothing is more common with him, than to say,[4] that God chooses and calls whom he foreknew would believe, would be holy, and devoted to him: which passages are therefore produced by Vossius,[5] and Dr. Whitby,[6] with others, to prove that the fathers held a predestination of men to life, from a prescience that they would live piously, believe and persevere.

If by predestination to glory, and not to grace, which is the meaning of the fathers, and of Hilary, we agree with them; we say also, that such whom God foreknew would believe, and be holy, he predestinated to eternal happiness; but then we say, the reason why God foreknew that any would believe, and be holy, is because he determined within himself to give them faith, and make them holy, and so prepare them for glory. Neither Hilary, nor any of the fathers, say, that God foresaw that men would believe of themselves and make themselves holy by their own care, diligence, and improvements of nature, nor that God foresaw that men would believe, and be holy, and therefore predestinated them to faith and holiness; but having determined to bestow faith and holiness upon them, he foresaw they would believe and be holy, and so through these as means he chose them to salvation.

That this is the sense of Hilary, appears partly from his suggesting that some are predestinated to believe. In one place[7] he says, "They believe, who are appointed to eternal life;" and in another,[8] "God of his own grace, of old decreed to save sinners (for God foreknew what would be in man before he made him, and he had sinned,) and predestinated how he should be recovered; in what time, and by whom, and in what way they might be saved: so that they who are saved, are not saved either by their own merit, or by theirs by whom they are called, but by the grace of God; the gift appears to be bestowed through the faith of Christ."

And partly this is evident from his account of prescience: "The prescience of God," says he,[9] "is that in which definitum habet, 'he has it determined' what shall be the will of every one, in which he is to remain, and through which he may be either damned or crowned." Agreeably to which he says,[10] "By prescience he chooses one and rejects another; and in him whom he chooses, the purpose of God remains; because another thing cannot happen than what God has known; et proposuit in illo, 'and hath purposed in him,' that he may be worthy of salvation; and in him whom he rejects, in like manner, 'the purpose which he hath purposed concerning him, remains;' for he will be unworthy: as foreknowing this, he is no acceptor of persons; for 'he damns no man before he sins, and crowns none before he overcomes.'" To which we heartily subscribe.

We say God damns no man but for sin, and crowns none until he has made them more than conquerors, through Christ. It is certain, that Hilary or the author of these commentaries, was of opinion, that there were some predestinated to life who should certainly be saved; and that others were not, who should certainly be damned; for he says,[11] "The apostle Paul, that he might, by his preaching, save, homines predestinatos ad vitam, 'men predestinated to life,' was subject to dangers, knowing that he should have the profit of their sought for salvation."

In another place[12] he says, "For unbelievers we must not very much grieve, qui non sunt predestinati ad vitam, 'because they are not predestinated unto life;' for the prescience of God has, of old, decreed, that they are not to be saved." And in another place,[13] "The law being abbreviated, the remnant of the Jews are saved; but the rest cannot be saved; qui per defintionem, Dei spernuntur, 'because, by the appointment of God they are rejected,' by which he hath decreed to save mankind."

Again, he says,[14] the apostle Paul, "by his own example, teacheth, that part of Israel is saved, whom God foreknew was to be saved, or yet can be saved; and that part of Israel, propter jugem diffidentiam perditioni deputatem, 'for their continual unbelief, is deputed to destruction.'" ENDNOTES:

[1] Contra duas Epist. Pelag. 50:4, c. 4.

[2] Comment. in 1 Timothy in. 15, p. 579.

[3] Vide Voss. Hist. Pelag. 50:2, par. 1, thes. 6, p. 168; Dallaei Apolog. p. 787.

[4] Comment. in Romans p. 241, 292, 294; in Ephesians p. 492; and in 2 Thessalonians p. 567.

[5] Hist. Pelag. 50:6, thes. 8, p. 543.

[6] Discourse, etc. p. 96; ed. 2. 98.

[7] Comment. in 1 Timothy p. 576.

[8] Ibid. in 2 Timothy p. 592.

[9] Ibid. in Romans p. 299.

[10] Ibid. p. 298, 299.

[11] Ibid. in 2 Timothy p. 594.

[12] Ibid. in Romans p. 299.

[13] Ibid. p. 302.

[14] Ibid. p. 308.

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