

Athanasius

by John Gill

John Gill's sermon on Athanasius explores his pivotal role in articulating the doctrines of predestination and the deity of Christ within Christian theology.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:9

Topics: "Predestination", "Sovereignty Of God"

Description

John Gill discusses the teachings of Athanasius, emphasizing his strong defense of the deity of Christ and the doctrines of predestination and election. Athanasius asserts that God's grace and salvation were prepared for humanity before the foundation of the world, highlighting the eternal purpose of God in Christ for our redemption. He argues that our calling and salvation are rooted in God's foreknowledge and will, demonstrating that the foundation of true religion predates the prophets and is established in Christ. Gill illustrates how Athanasius honors both the Father and the Son by affirming the eternal provision of grace and the deity of Christ, who undertook the work of salvation from eternity. This sermon serves as a powerful reminder of God's sovereign plan for salvation and the assurance it brings to believers.

Transcript

The

CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH.

Part 4

Chapter 1--Of Predestination

Section 11--Athanasius. A.D. 350.

Athanasius was made bishop of Alexandria A.D. 336, and died A.D. 371, who,[1] as he bore an excellent testimony to the deity of Christ against the Arians, so he has left ample proof of his attachment to the doctrines of eternal predestination and election, and of a preparation of grace and glory in Christ before the foundation of the world; as will clearly appear from the following passages:[2] "The grace of the Savior to us-ward hath appeared of late, as saith the apostle, when he came to us; proetoimasto de aute kai priu genesthai emas, mallon de kai pro tes katabotes tou kosmou, but was 'prepared before, even before we were, yea, before the foundation of the world;' the cause of this is, in some respect, kind and astonishing; for it was not proper that God should, usteron peri emon bouleuesthai, afterwards consult concerning us,

that it might not appear as if he knew not the things that belong to us; wherefore, the God of the universe creating us by his own word, and knowing our affairs better than we ourselves, and foreknowing, indeed, that we should be made good, but afterwards, become transgressors of the commandment, and for that transgression be cast out of Paradise: he being a lover of mankind, and good, proetoimazei en to idio logo, di ou kai ektisentemas peri tes soteriodous emon oikonomias, before prepared in his own word, by whom he also created us for the economy of our salvation; that though we fall, being deceived by the serpent, we might not utterly remain dead, all' echontes en to logo ten proetoimasmenen emin lutrosin kai soterian, 'but, having redemption and salvation before prepared for us in the word, rising again, we might continue immortal."

And then, citing those famous and well-known places in scripture (2 Tim. 1:9, 10; Eph. 1:3-5), he proceeds thus: pos oun exelexato prin genesthai emas, ei me, os autos eireken, en outo emen protetupomenoi, pos de olos prin anthropous ktisthenai emas proarisen, etc., "how therefore should he choose us before we were, unless, as he has said, we were before delineated in him? how verily, before men were created, should he predestinate us," unless the Son of himself had been founded before the world was, having undertaken the economy of salvation for us? or how, as the apostle says, should we obtain an inheritance, being predestinated, unless the Lord himself was founded before the world was; that he might have a purpose, to receive through the flesh for us, the whole lot of condemnation that was against us, and so we at length might be made alive in him; pos de kai pro chronon aionion elambanomen, mepo gegonotes all' en chrono gegonotes, eime en to Christo en apokeimene e eis emas phthanousa charis, "or how should we, not yet made, but made in time, receive before the world began, except the grace that is to come unto us had been laid up in Christ?"

Wherefore, in the judgment, when every one shall receive according to his deeds, he says, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; pos oun, e en tini prin genesthai emas etoimasthe, ei me to Kurio, "how therefore, or in whom should it be prepared before we were, but in the Lord," who was founded for this before the world was; that we, as stones well fitted together, might partake of life and grace from him? So it is, as any pious man may in some measure understand, that, as I have before said, rising from a death, which is but for a little while, we shall be able to live for ever; which men who are of the earth would never be able to do, ei me pro aionos en troetoimastheisa emin en Christo, e tes zoes kai soterias elpis," if the hope of life and salvation had not been prepared for us in Christ before the world was."

And a little after^[3] adds: "Having life and spiritual blessings prepared, before the world, for us in the word, according to election;" so we can have not a temporary life, but for the future continue alive in Christ. Moreover, seeing, pro touton, e zoe emon tethemelioto kai etoimaso en Christo, "before these our life was founded and prepared in Christ" (for it was not proper that our life should be founded on any other than in the Lord, who existed before the world was, and by whom the worlds are made,) hence that being in him we shall also inherit eternal life.

For God is good, and being always good wills this, knowing that our weak nature needs his help and salvation; and as a wise master-builder, purposing to build a house, is likewise desirous that, should it be destroyed, it might afterwards be repaired again; and willing this, he before provides and gives proper materials for a reparation to the workmen, which is a preparation beforehand. Now, as a fore-preparation of the repair is before the house, ton auton tropon, pro emon e tes emeteras soterian ananeosis themelioutai en Christo, "in like manner, before us the reparation of our salvation is founded in Christ," that in him also we may be created again.

Kaie men boule kai e protheois pro tou dionos etoimasthe, "and the will and purpose was indeed prepared before the world was, but the work was done when necessity required and the Savior came." A most noble testimony of antiquity this to the doctrine of eternal predestination in Christ. In another place,[4] he shows that our vocation in time is according to an antecedent will of God; his words are these: "For even Paul was not at first, though afterwards he was made an apostle by the will of God; so our calling, which sometimes was not, and now is, proegoumenen eche boulesin, hath a preceding will; for as Paul himself again says, he was made, that is an apostle, according to the good pleasure of his will."

And elsewhere,[5] he affirms that the foundation of true religion is more ancient than the prophets, and even from eternity; for speaking of the times in which they prophesied he says, "Not that they laid the foundation of godliness, en gar kai pro auton kai aei en, kai pro kateboles kosmou, tauten emin o Theos en Christo proetoimasen, for it was before them, and always was, yea, even before the foundation of the world, this God before prepared for us in Christ." And in another part of his writings,[6] where he is giving an account of the epistle to the Ephesians, he observes that "the apostle, in the beginning of it, shows that the mystery respecting us is not new; but that exarches kai kataboles kosmou einia tauten eudoman tou Theou, oste ton Christon uper emon pathein kai emas sothenai, from the beginning, even from the foundation of the world, this was the good will and pleasure of God, that Christ should suffer for us, and that we should be saved."

'And in his abridgement of the epistle to Titus he has these words:[7] "the apostle, says he, in the first place, gives thanks to God for his piety, and signifies that faith in Christ was not a new thing, all' ex aionos etoimasthe kai epengelthai para tou Theou touten, but that this was from eternity prepared and promised by God." Thus did this brave champion for truth at once both honor the Father and the Son, by asserting the special and early provision of grace, life, and salvation, made in Christ by the Father before the world began; and by proving and maintaining the eternity and proper deity of the Son, his undertaking, from eternity, to suffer for us, and the satisfaction he has made in time for sin, to the justice of God. Dr. Whitby[8] refers to one passage in this writer, in favor of free-will, which will be attended to under that article. ENDNOTES:

[1] Dallaei Apolog. part 4, p. 777.

[2] Athanas. Contr. Arian. Orat. 3, p. 245, 246, vol. i.

[3] Athanas. contr. Arian. Orat. 3, p. 447.

[4] Ibid. Orat. 4, p. 511.

[5] De Synodi Arimin. & Seleuc. p. 871.

[6] Synops. Sacr. cript, vol. 2. p. 145.

[7] Ibid. vol. 3. p. 51.

[8] Discourse on the Five Points, p. 97; ed. 2. 95.

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