

Caecilius Thascius Cyprianus

by John Gill

John Gill's sermon on Cyprian explores his theological contributions, particularly on predestination and grace, emphasizing humility in faith.

Scripture: John 3:27, Romans 8:30, Romans 9:11, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Ephesians 1:4-5, Philippians 1:6, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 1:9, Hebrews 10:14, 1 Peter 1:2

Topics: "Grace Of God", "Predestination"

Description

John Gill discusses the teachings of Caecilius Thascius Cyprianus, emphasizing the doctrine of predestination and the grace of God. Cyprian, an early church father and martyr, asserted that all gifts and obedience come from God, highlighting the importance of humility in recognizing that nothing is ours by merit. Gill notes that Cyprian's views align with Augustine's understanding of predestination, which emphasizes that believers are chosen by God and that their salvation is not based on their own works. The sermon reflects on the certainty of God's grace and the role of the Trinity in the process of salvation. Ultimately, it calls Christians to acknowledge their dependence on God's gifts and to live in accordance with His will.

Transcript

The

CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH.

Part 4

Chapter 1--Of Predestination

Section 9--Caecilius Thascius Cyprianus. A.D. 250.

Cyprian was an African by birth; he was first a Presbyter, and afterwards Bishop of Carthage: he was made Bishop of that place A.D. 248, and suffered martyrdom A.D. 258, under Valerianus and Gallienus. He[1] wrote many excellent things, some of which are preserved to this day. The great Augustin thought him to be of the same mind with himself in the doctrine of predestination, which he gathered from those words of his;[2] In nullo gloriandum quando nostrum nihil sit; "we must glory, in nothing, since nothing is ours;" according to John 3:27.

A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. And 1 Corinthians 4:7, What hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? Upon which Austin makes this remark;[3] "this Cyprian most truly saw, and most confidently asserted; per quod utique praedestinationem certissimam pronunciavit, whereby also he hath pronounced predestination to be most certain:" for if we must glory in nothing, since nothing is ours, neither must we glory truly of our most persevering obedience; nor is that to be said to be so ours, as if it was not given us from above; and that itself therefore is the gift of God; which God foreknew that he would give to his own, who are called with the calling of which it is said, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and must be owned by every Christian; haec est igitur praedestinatio, quam fideliter et humiliter praedicamus; "this is therefore the predestination which we faithfully and humbly preach."

And a little after, having repeated the same words of Cyprian, his observation is this; "where, says he, without any ambiguity, he declares the true grace of God, that is, which is not given according to our merits, and which God foreknew that he would give; his Cypriani verbis procul dubio praedestinatio praedicata est: in these words of Cyprian, without all doubt, predestination is asserted." There are some books ascribed to Cyprian, which are called in question by learned men, whether they are his or no, such as those which are entitled, De Disciplina et bono Pudicitiae, and De Cardinalibus Operibus Christi: their style is thought, by Erasmus, not to agree with Cyprian's; but Pamelus affirms them to be his:[4] however, the former of these is allowed to be written by a learned man, and suspected to be done by Cornelius, bishop of Rome, cotemporary with Cyprian; and the latter to be the work, antiqui et docti autoris, "of an ancient and learned author," and thought to be written in the age of Cornelius and Cyprian; though in a very ancient copy in the library of All-Souls college in Oxford, it goes under the name of Arnoldus Bonavillacensis:[5] and, therefore, must be the work of far later writer, even of one that lived in the times of Bernard; wherefore, as the genuineness and antiquity of these treatises are questioned, I shall lay no stress upon the testimonies I now produce out of them.

In the first of these[6] the author exhorts the saints to chastity, from such considerations as these: "Knowing," says he, "that you are the temple of the Lord, the members of Christ, the habitation of the Holy Ghost; electos ad spem, consecratos ad fidem, destinatos ad salutem; elected to hope, devoted to faith, appointed to salvation." And in the latter of these,[7] the compiler of it ascribes the several distinct acts of grace to the persons in the blessed Trinity, and among the rest, particularly election to the Father; his words are these: "In this school of divine learning, the Father is he that teaches and instructs, the Son who reveals and opens the secrets of God unto us, and the Holy Spirit who fills and furnishes us.

From the Father we receive power, from the Son wisdom, and from the Holy Spirit innocence. Pater eligit, 'the Father chooses,' the Son loves, the Holy Spirit joins and unites. By the Father is given us eternity, by the Son conformity to his image, and by the Holy Spirit integrity and liberty." In another place[8] he speaks of the elect, as of a certain number that shall be saved, when Christ shall return to judge the world: "When, says he, all mankind collected together, shall see the hands they have pierced, the side they have bored, the face they have spit upon, and the irreversible sentence being openly declared, occurrentibus salvatori electis, 'the elect meeting the Savior,' the ungodly shall remain deputed to infinite torments" And, in another part of the same work,[9] speaking of the manna in the wilderness, he thus expresses himself: "There was," says he, a full measure "through the whole week, the sabbath-day vacant; for which the preceding sixth day, doubling the quantity of the usual food, prefigured the rest of the eighth day, in which, without labor and care, in deliciis equilabuntur electi, the elect shall feast with delight, and shall be satisfied in their own land; possessing double, being enriched with an happy perpetuity, and a perpetual happiness

of body and soul."

There is a passage referred to in the true Cyprian, by Dr. Whitby,[10] to prove that it is in the power of man believe or not: but since this belongs to the article of freewill, the consideration of it must be deferred till we come to it. ENDNOTES:

[1] Vide Hieron. Catalog. Script. s. 77; Dallaei Apolog. part 4, p. 768.

[2] Cyprian. ad Quirin. 50:3, c. 4, p. 373.

[3] Aug. de bono Persever. 50:2. c. 14.

[4] Vide Rivet. Critici Sacri, 50:2, c. 15.

[5] James's Corruption of the Fathers, part 1, p. 18.

[6] De bono Pudicitiae, p. 417.

[7] De Baptismo Christi, p. 455.

[8] De Ascensione Christi, p. 484.

[9] De Spiritu Sancto, p. 486.

[10] Discourse on the Five Points, p. 90; ed. 2.95.

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