

# Hieronymus

by John Gill

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*John Gill's sermon on Hieronymus explores the concept of election and predestination, emphasizing that God's choice of individuals for salvation is based on His mercy and love, rather than their holiness or good works.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:4

**Topics:** "Election", "Predestination"

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## Description

John Gill discusses the teachings of Hieronymus on predestination, emphasizing that election is not based on nations but on individual wills, and that those chosen by God were selected before the foundation of the world. Hieronymus argues that God's election is rooted in His love and mercy, rather than human holiness, and that predestination is aligned with God's foreknowledge without compromising human free will. He firmly opposes Pelagianism, asserting that God's grace is essential for salvation and that individuals are chosen to become holy through their faith and actions.

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## Transcript

The

CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH.

Part 4

Chapter 1--Of Predestination

Section 19--Hieronymus. A.D. 390.

Hieronymus, or Jerom, of Stridon, in Dalmatia, was a presbyter of the church; he was born, according to Monsieur Daille,[1] A. D. 340, and died A. D. 420. He lived much of his time in Palestine, at Jerusalem, and especially at Bethlehem: he was a man of great learning, and wrote much, though there are many things ascribed to him which are none of his; and in his commentaries it is sometimes difficult to know when he speaks his own or the sense of others. He is allowed, on all hands, to be an eager opposer of the Pelagian principles.

And with respect to the doctrines of election and predestination he held, 1. That election was not of whole nations but of particular persons; "for," says he,[2] "the vessels of mercy are not only the people of the Gentiles, but likewise those among the Jews who would believe, and are made one people of believers;

hence it appears, that non gentes eligi sed hominum voluntates, 'not nations are chosen, but the wills of men.'" And in another place he observes,[3] "that for this cause all nations are moved, that from their motion might come electa gentium multitudo, 'the elect multitude of nations,' which are every where famous;" for instance, electa de Corintho, "the elect out of Corinth," because there was much people of God there.

Electa de Macedonia, "the elect out of Macedonia," because there was a large church of God in Thessalonica, who had no need to be taught concerning love. Electa de Epheso, "the elect out of Ephesus;" that they might know the secrets of God, and those mysteries which were before revealed to none. What shall I say more? All nations are moved to whom the Savior sent the apostles, saying, Go, teach all nations; and of the many called, few being chosen, they built the church of the primitive saints; hence, says the apostle Peter, The church that is at Babylon, elected, and Marcus, my son, salute you.

And, says John, The elder to the elect lady; and who also makes mention of the children of the elect lady. 2. He asserted, that those who are chosen of God in Christ, were chosen before the world began; or that election is from eternity; for in one place he says,[4] "It must be affirmed, that according to the prescience and predestination of God, those things are already done which are future. Qui enim electi sunt in Christo ante constitutionem mundi, 'for they that are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,' have been already in former ages."

And in interpreting those words in Isaiah 25:1, Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth; after he has mentioned the sense of the Jewish writers, observes,[5] that "others better and more rightly understand them as spoken in the person of the prophet, giving thanks to the Father for the sufferings of the Lord the Savior; because he had done wonderful things; et cogitationes antiquas veritate compleverit, 'and had faithfully fulfilled ancient thoughts;' when they that stand at his right hand shall hear these words, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Which also Paul understanding, spoke of, saying, As he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame." Which last words of the apostle being elsewhere mentioned by him, he says,[6] "This we so interpret that we say, that election is not, according to Origen, of them who had been before, but we refer it to the prescience of God: moreover, we say, that we are chosen that we may be holy and without blame before him, that is, God; ante fabricam mundi, 'before the world was made;' which testifies, that it belongs to the prescience of God, to whom all things future are already done, and all things are known before they be; as Paul himself was predestinated in his mother's womb, and Jeremy in the belly, was sanctified, chosen, and, in the type of Christ, sent a prophet to the nations."; 3.

He also held that election was irrespective of holiness, as a motive or cause of it, but that it arises from the love, grace, and mercy of God; for in one part of his works, he has these words,[7] "The apostle does not say, he chose us, before the foundation of the world; cum essemus sancti et immaculati, 'when we were holy and without blame;' but, he chose us, that we might be holy and without blame; that is, qui sancti et immaculati ante non fuimus, ut postea essemus; that we, who before were not holy and without blame, might afterwards be so."

And a little after he adds, "Paul, and they that are like him, are not chosen, 'quia erant sancti & immaculati, because they were holy and without blame;' but they are chosen and predestinated, that in their lives following they might become holy and without blame by their works and virtues." And in another place he

plainly intimates,[8] that predestination springs from the mercy and love of God; for speaking of Jacob he says, "Whiles he was yet in Rebecca's womb, he supplanted his brother Esau, not truly by his own strength, but by the mercy of God, qui cognoscit & diligit quos praedestinavit, who knows and loves those whom he hath predestinated."

It is true indeed, in the first citation I have made from this author, he says, that not nations are chosen, sed voluntates hominum, "but the wills of men;" though what he means by it is not very easy to understand: his meaning cannot be, that God chose such persons whom he knew would of their own free will, by the mere strength of nature, do that which was good; for this is pure Pelagianism, to which Jerom was an enemy; and is contrary to those principles of grace he was a strenuous defender of.

But, if his meaning was, that God chose such to happiness, who he knew would be made willing to obey him in the day of his. power, because he had determined to make them so; this entirely agrees with our sentiments. There is another passage cited by Grotius[9] from this writer, where he says,[10] that God eligat eum quem interim bonum cernit, "chooses him whom for the present he knows to be good;" but it is easy to observe, that Jerom is there speaking, not of God's choice of men to eternal happiness, but of Christ's choosing Judas to the apostleship, who appeared for a while to be good, though he knew he would be wicked.

To which may be added another passage produced by Dr. Whitby,[11] after Grotius,[12] and Vossius,[13] to prove that election is from a foresight of good works, in which this writer says,[14] that, dilectio et odium Dei vel ex praescientia nascitur futurorum vel ex operibus, "the love and hatred of God arises either from the foreknowledge of things future, or from works." But what he means by this disjunctive proposition, is not very evident; it is very probable, that by the love and hatred of God, he means the effects of them, salvation and damnation, which according to him proceed either according to the prescience of God, or the works of men.

As for the citation out of the Commentary on the epistle to the Romans made by Vossius and Dr. Whitby,[15] I take no notice of, because it is judged by learned men[16] not to be his, but either the work of Pelagius himself, or of some Pelagian writer. I deny not, but that Jerom held election to be according to the prescience of God, to which he refers it in the passages cited by the above writers, out of his commentaries on the epistles to the Galatians and Ephesians; and so do we, in a sense agreeable to the Scriptures; and it is evident that Jerom had the same sentiments of the foreknowledge of God as we have; for, says he,[17] Non enim ex eo quod Dens seit futurum aliquid, idcirco futurum est, sed quia futurum est, Deus novit; "not because God knows something to be future, therefore it is future, but because it is future, God knows it, as having a foreknowledge of things to come."

And though in the same place, and else where,[18] he observes, that the prescience of God does not necessitate or force men to do this, or not to do that, but notwithstanding it, the will of man is preserved free in all his actions; the same we also say, and to this we readily assent. ENDNOTES:

[1] Apolog. p. 4, p. 821.

[2] Hieron. ep. ad Hedib. qu. 10, tom. 6:p. 49, B.

[3] Comment. in Hagg, 2:6, tom. 6:p. 108, B.

[4] In Eccl. tom. 7. p. 38, 1.

- [5] Isaiah 25:1, tom. 5:p. 48, F.
- [6] Apolog. adv. Ruffin. 1. tom. 2. p. 68, M; et Comment. In Ephesians 1:4, tom. 9:p. 90, C.
- [7] Ibid. p. 69, B; et Comment. In Ephesians 1:11, tom. 9:p. 90, E.
- [8] Comment. in Hosea tom. 6:p. 21, B.
- [9] Disquisit. de Dogm. Pelagian. p. 11.
- [10] Adv. Pelag. 1. 8, tom. 2:p. 100.
- [11] Discourse, etc. p. 99; ed. 2. 97; and Postscript, p. 557; ed. 2. 534.
- [12] Ubi supra, p. 10.
- [13] Aist. Pelag. 1. 6, thes. 8, p. 544.
- [14] Hieron. in Malachi tom. 6:p. 128, H.
- [15] P. 102; ed. 2. 100.
- [16] Vide Rivet. Critic. Sacr. 1.4, c. 5, p. 374; et Voss. Hist. Pelag. 1. 1, c. 9, p. 12.
- [17] Comment in Jeremiah tom. 5:p. 162, C.
- [18] Ibid. in Ezekiel tom. 5:p. 177, E; et in Eccl. tom. 7:p. 35, F.

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