

# Justin

by John Gill

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*The sermon discusses Justin Martyr's insights on God's foreknowledge and the interplay between divine election and human free will.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:29

**Topics:** "Predestination", "Divine Foreknowledge"

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## Description

John Gill discusses the teachings of Justin Martyr, emphasizing God's eternal prescience and predestination. Justin asserts that God foreknows the choices of individuals regarding faith and repentance, and that salvation is prepared for some while others face judgment due to their own choices. He clarifies that God's foreknowledge does not compel individuals to sin, and that all have the opportunity to seek God's mercy. Justin's writings highlight the elect as a chosen people from all nations, reinforcing the idea of divine selection and grace. This sermon underscores the balance between God's sovereignty and human free will.

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## Transcript

The

CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH.

Part 4

Chapter 1--Of Predestination

Section 3--Justin. A.D. 150.

Justin, called the Martyr, to distinguish him from others of the same name, was a native of Samaria; he was born A.D. 89, was brought up a philosopher, afterwards became a Christian, and suffered martyrdom in the third year of M. Aurelius Antonius, and L. Verus, A.D. 163.[1] Several of his writings continue to this day, in which may be observed: 1. That he ascribes to God an eternal and universal prescience of future events; upon which proceed depredictions in the sacred writings.

He asserts that God foreknew who would be good or bad, who would repent and believe, and who not, and who will be saved or damned; all which, as it perfectly agrees with the word of God, so with our sentiments. Justin no where says, that God foreknew that any would be good, repent, and believe of

themselves, without his grace, by the mere strength of nature; and that he chose any to glory and happiness upon such a foresight of their good works, repentance, and faith: much less that he chose them to grace upon a prescience of these things; and, indeed, no man in his senses would say, that God chose man to faith upon a foresight of faith; but lest what this author has said should be thought to militate against us, we will produce the several passages.

Addressing himself<sup>[2]</sup> to Trypho the Jew, he thus speaks: "None of you, as I think, will dare to say, *oti me kai prognostes ton ginesthai mellonton en kai estino Theos, kai ta axia ekasto proetoimazon*, that God was not, and is not, foreknowing of what shall be done, or afore prepares not things fitting for every one." And elsewhere,<sup>[3]</sup> *alethesteroi oi apo ton ethnou kai pistoterai proeginoskonto*, "the more true and faithful among the Gentiles, were foreknown;" that is, it was foreknown by God, that many of them would be so.

Hence the prophets, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, foretold, that they would believe in Christ, when "the Jews and Samaritans, who had the word delivered them from God by the prophets, and were always expecting the Messiah, knew him not when he came; *plhn oligwn tinwn*, excepting some few, whom the holy prophetic Spirit, by Isaiah, *proeipe swqhsesqai*, foretold should be saved; who, personating them, said, Except the Lord had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom and Gomorrah."

He has, indeed, this observation,<sup>[4]</sup> and it is a very good one, "that when we assert that what is foretold by the prophets shall be done, we do not say, that it shall be done by the necessity of fate, *alla prognostou tou Theou outos ton mellonton upo panton anthron prachthesesthai*, but that God foreknows things future, that shall be done by all men." So having cited Isaiah 33:18,<sup>[5]</sup> he says, "that the people who were foreknown to believe in him (Christ) *oti laos o eis auton pisteuein proegnosmenos*, should meditate the fear of the Lord, was also foreknown, the very words of the prophecy declare."

And in another place,<sup>[6]</sup> says he; "I am able to show, that all the things appointed by Moses were types, symbols, and declarations of what should be done to Christ; *kai ton eis auton pisteuein proegnosmenon*, and of them that were foreknown to believe in him: and likewise of those things that were to be done by Christ." And elsewhere,<sup>[7]</sup> speaking of the punishment of devils and wicked men, which is at present deferred by God for the sake of men, gives this as the reason of it: *proginoskei gar tinas en me tanoias sothesesthai mellontas, kai tinas medepo isos gennethentas*; "for he foreknew that some would be saved through repentance; and, perhaps, some not yet born:" for at first he made mankind intelligent, and able to choose the truth, and to do well; so that all "men are left without excuse by God." 2.

Justin asserts, that God not only foreknows that some will be saved, and others damned, but that he has afore prepared salvation for some persons, and punishment for others. Speaking<sup>[8]</sup> of the sufferings of Christians for the sake of Christ, he has these words; which, says he, we bear, that we may not "with our voice deny Christ, by whom we are called *eiv swthrian thn prohtoimasmenhn para tou Patrov hmwn*, unto the salvation which is before prepared by our Father." And in another place,<sup>[9]</sup> treating of Christ as the Angel of the great counsel, according to the Septuagint version of Isaiah 9:6, he thus speaks: "The great things, *ebouleuto o Pathr*, which the Father hath in his counsel appointed for all men," that are or shall be well-pleasing to him, and likewise those that depart from his will, whether angels or men, he only (Christ) hath most clearly taught, Matthew 8:11, 12, and 7:22, 23; and in other words, when he will condemn the unworthy that shall not be saved, he will say to them, "Go ye into outer darkness, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels."

He elsewhere,[10] indeed well observes, "that it is not the fault of God, oi proginwskomenoi kai genhsomenoi adikoi, that those who are foreknown, and shall be unrighteous, whether angels or men, that they are wicked; but it is through their own fault that every one is such as he appears to be." And a little further, he adds, "Wherefore if the word of God intimates beforehand that some angels and men shall be punished, because that proeginosken autous ometabletous genesomenous ponerous, he foreknew that they would be immutably wicked;" it has foretold these things, but not that God has made them such; seeing, if they repent, all, boulomenoi, that are willing to obtain the mercy of God may.

To which we heartily agree. We say that God makes no man wicked, but he makes himself so; that neither the foreknowledge of God, nor his decrees, necessitate men to sin; and that God damns no man, nor has he decreed to damn any but for sin; and that whoever is truly desirous of the grace and mercy of God, may obtain it through Christ. 3. This ancient and valuable Christian writer not only speaks of the people of God under the title and appellation of the elect, as he does at the close of an epistle[11] of his to some persons for whom he prays, that "the Lord of glory, who exists for ever, would give to them all to enjoy honor and rest meta tw n eklektwn, with the elect;" but he also speaks of them as a special people, selected out of every nation, and as a fixed number to be completed.

In one place, disputing with Trypho the Jew, he has these words:[12] "God, out of all nations, took your nation to himself, a nation unprofitable, disobedient, and unfaithful; thereby pointing out touv apo pantov genouv airoumenouv, those that are chosen out of every nation to obey his will, by Christ, whom also he calls Jacob, and names Israel." And addressing himself to the same Jew, he says,[13] "In all these discourses I have brought all my proofs out of your holy and prophetic writings, hoping that some of you may be found ek tou kata charin ten apo tou Kuriou sabaoth perileieiphthentos eis ten aionion soterian, of the number which through the grace that comes from the Lord of Sabaoth, is left or reserved to everlasting salvation."

And in another treatise of his he observes,[14] that "God introduced Christ into heaven after his resurrection from the dead, and detains him there until he has smitten his enemies the devils, kai suntelesthe o arithmos ton proegnosthenon auto aga non ginomenon kai enareton, and the number of them that are foreknown by him to be good and virtuous is completed; di otv, for whose sake he has not yet made the determined consummation." Which perfectly agrees with the doctrine of the apostle Peter, and gives light into the sense of his words in 2 Peter 3:9, where the same reason is given for the deferring of Christ's coming to judgment.

There is but one passage out of Justin produced by Dr. Whitby[15] in opposition to the doctrine of absolute election, and that properly belongs to the article of free will under which it will be considered. ENDNOTES:

[1] Vide Fabricii Bibl. Graec. 50:5, c. 1, p. 51. 52.

[2] Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 234.

[3] Apulog. pro Christian. 2, p. 88, 89.

[4] Ibid. p. 82.

[5] Dialog. cum. Tryph. p. 296, 297.

[6] Ibid. p, 261.

[7] Apol. pro Christ. 2. p. 71.

[8] Dialog. cum. Tryph. p. 360.

[9] Ibid. p. 301.

[10] Ibid. p. 370.

[11] Epist. ad Zeuam et Sereu. p. 515.

[12] Dialog. cum Tryph, 359, 360.

[13] Ibid. p. 249.

[14] Apol. pro Christ. 2, p. 82.

[15] Disc. on the Five Points, p. 96: ed. 2. 95.

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