

V. 13, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord." He does not so much praise or flatter their constancy, as he gives thanks on their account. But neither does he hesitate to tell the elect of their safety. He speaks of all believers as of that number; all who love the truth are saved. In the beginning of the former epistle he had told his Thessalonian converts how he knew their election of God. It was not by any sight granted to him more than to others of the book of the decrees, or of the names written in the book of life; it was by the reception they had given to the gospel, and the fruits it had produced on their lives. But it is very instructive to observe, that Paul rests his confidence of their final well-being and steadfast perseverance on God's unchanging purpose. Nor does he dream of its being unsafe to assure them of their interest in that purpose. We shall see immediately how he guards against an abuse of this doctrine. But mark first, how, so far from concealing his belief of their interest in the decree of love; when he would give expression to his firmest hope of their constancy, it is with this he begins; "Brethren, beloved of the Lord." Such is the designation he applies to them, recognizing in this the surest guarantee for their abiding in the faith:—they were interested in that special love or grace which having eternally chosen them to everlasting life, would not fail to carry on the good work to its consummation. Few passages appear to us more explicit than this, in proving a decree of election, and in demonstrating that the election has been from everlasting; that it respects individuals; that it is free, uncaused, I mean, by the foresight of the faith or good works of some as compared with others; that it is holy withal, including provision for the sanctification as well as salvation and final happiness of the chosen.

"From the beginning," says the Apostle, "he hath chosen you." This is undoubtedly expressive of the eternity of the choice. It was before all time. It is in vain that it has been attempted to give another meaning to the words as if denoting the beginning of the gospel only: for it is matter of history that the Thessalonians had not received the Gospel