INTRODUCTION. ] 1 THESSALONIANS. (cu. vit.   
   
 ‘‘Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” was   
 ever the order which the apostolic proclamation took. The earliest of   
 the Epistles are ever moral and practical, the advanced ones more   
 doctrinal and spiritual. It was not till it appeared, in the unfolding   
 of God’s Providence, that the bulwark of salvation by grace must be   
 strengthened, that the building on the one foundation must be raised   
 thus impregnable to the righteousness of works and the law, that the   
 Epistles to the Galatians and Romans were given through the great   
 Apostle, reaching to the full breadth and height of the great argument.   
 Then followed the Epistles of the imprisonment, building up higher and   
 higher the edifice thus consolidated; and the Pastoral Epistles, suited to   
 a more developed ecclesiastical condition, and aimed at the correction of   
 abuses, which sprung up later, or were the ripened fruit of former doc-   
 trinal errors.   
 4, In all these, however, we trace the same great elementary truths   
 of the faith, Witness to them is never wanting: nor can it be said that   
 any change of ground respecting them ever took place. The work of   
 the Spirit as regarded them, was one of expanding and deepening, of   
 freeing from narrow views, and setting in clearer and fuller light: of   
 ranging and grouping collateral and local circumstances, so that the   
 great doctrines of grace became ever more and more prominent and   
 paramount.   
 5. But while this was so with these ‘first principles,’ the very view   
 which we have taken will shew, that as regarded other things which lay   
 at a greater distance from central truths, it was otherwise. In such   
 matters, the Apostle was taught by experience; Christ’s’work brought   
 its lessons with it: and it would be not only unnatural, but would   
 remove from his writings the living freshness of personal reality, if we   
 found him the same in all points of this kind, at the beginning, and at   
 the end of his epistolary labours: if there were no characteristic differ-   
 ences of mode of thought and expression in 1 Thessalonians and in   
 2 Timothy: if advance of years had brought with it no corresponding   
 advance of standing-point, change of circumstances no change of counsel,   
 trial of God’s ways no further insight into God’s designs.   
 6. Nor are we left to conjecture as to those subjects on which   
 especially such change, and ripening of view and conviction, might   
 be expected to take place. There was one most important point, on   
 which our Lord Himself spoke with marked and solemn uncertainty.   
 The TIME OF HIS OWN ComING was hidden from all created beings,—nay,   
 in the mystery of his mediatorial office, from the Son Himself (Mark   
 xiii. 32). Even after his Resurrection, when questioned by the Apostles   
 as to the time of his restoring the Kingdom to Israel, his reply is still,   
 that “it is not for them to know the times and the seasons, which the   
 Father hath put in his own power” (Acts i. 7).   
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