

reward for His marvellous self-humiliation is now exalted to universal dominion; and exhortation to a life worthy of their citizenship in the heavenly kingdom.

THE LETTER TO PHILEMON

Probably sent along with Colossians to Paul's friend Philemon, a rich convert at Colosse. Onesimus his slave had run away to Rome, and there through Paul he was led to Christ. With the finest tact, Paul pleads with Philemon in this beautiful letter to receive back as a Christian brother the once unprofitable slave.

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

After his acquittal Paul visited Macedonia, Asia Minor and Crete, possibly Spain also. Some years had gone by since he had been in Asia, and meantime false teachers had done harm with profane speculation, Jewish lore, and perhaps magic. Some practised a false asceticism, others were immoral. The three letters are called the Pastoral Epistles because Paul wrote them to help Timothy and Titus in their pastoral duties.

I. TIMOTHY—The earliest of the three. Timothy needed strength for his difficult position in Ephesus. He must guard "wholesome doctrine" in the church, which is the pillar to hold up the truth of the gospel of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection. For this purpose he must have a worthy ministry of bishops, elders, or presbyters (all the same), and deacons. By pure teaching and godliness false teachers are to be resisted.

TITUS—Titus was a stronger man than Timothy, but he had a very hard field among the rude people of Crete. The conditions were not very different from those in Ephesus. Shortly after Paul left Crete he wrote this letter, perhaps from Macedonia, to warn Titus against the error that was playing havoc in his churches. He must preach sound doctrine and the need of piety, and organize a ministry of elders with high moral character.

II. TIMOTHY—Paul's last letter. He is again in prison in Rome. He is cold, without his books, friendless except for Luke; and he longs for Timothy to come to him before winter. But he must first set the church of Ephesus in order, showing himself an exam-

ple of a faithful minister, avoiding foolish discussions, teaching the truth, and living a sober and godly life. The aged apostle entreats him to come as soon as possible, for his end is near. See especially the noble words of ch. 4:5-8.

LESSON XXIII.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

AUTHOR—No early writer of repute ascribes this letter to the apostle Paul, indeed it was not till the fifth century that the church as a whole accepted it as his. We cannot say who wrote it. Luther's guess of Apollis is, perhaps, the best. The writer was much influenced by Paul's thought, but is of quite a distinct type. Paul's leading idea is, how can a sinner become righteous in God's sight? That of Hebrews is holiness—how can a sinful man approach God? Paul regards the law on its moral side; Hebrews on the ceremonial side.

READERS—The gospel was first preached to them by personal disciples of Jesus, ch. 2:3, 4. They had joyfully endured suffering, and had helped those in persecution, chs. 6:10; 10:32-34. The argument of the letter, turning on a comparison of the old and new covenants, shows that they had once been Jews. But it is impossible to say where these "Hebrews" lived.

OCCASION—The church is in great peril. Persecution and social influence, new teaching and practices (ch. 13:9), and worldliness were causing some to waver, or even fall into unbelief. Many Christians had grown disappointed. They had not faith to endure both suffering, and the taunts of the Jews about their crucified Messiah, and their unfulfilled hopes of His return. Perhaps, thought they, we have made a mistake in abandoning Israel with its glorious past, the patriarchs, sacrifices and promises, for an upstart doctrine like Christianity.

PURPOSE—The author's aim is to show that Christianity is the final and perfect religion. So he contrasts it with Judaism, which had hitherto been the fullest revelation to the world.

CONTENTS—In Judaism God gave a partial revelation through prophets or angels; in Christianity He spoke the final word in His