

2. *The Commandments show us our need of Christ.* The law teaches us what we ought to be, what we should strive to be. When, however, we look at ourselves in its light, we find that we are the very thing which the law condemns. Having, therefore, itself no saving power, it impels us to seek One who can save. That is Christ. His work is "to magnify the law," and rescue us from its penalty. He also gives us strength to keep the law, saving us not from obedience but unto obedience. He pardons our past violations of the law; he assists us to keep the law; and forgives yet again our imperfect attempts to keep it. The soul's only freedom, therefore, is in accepting him who purifies while he pardons, and strengthens while he justifies. The Commandments have not done their work unless, as a "schoolmaster," they have led to Christ. It is not their province to alter or improve man's corrupted nature, but to show how great is his need of Divine help. Convicted by the Law of sin, Christ becomes such a Saviour as the soul requires, such as its necessities demand. In view of what man ought to be, but is not, Christ appears an atoning, forgiving, divinely-helping Redeemer. Will you accept him?

"Slain in the guilty sinner's stead,  
His spotless righteousness I plead,  
And His availing blood:  
Thy merit, Lord, my robe shall be,  
Thy merit shall atone for me,  
And bring me near to God."

LESSON XI.] [SEPT. 11, 1881.

### IDOLATRY PUNISHED.

Exod. 32 : 26-35.

We cannot read this account without being shocked at the suddenness and shamefulfulness of the Israelites' sin. They were just redeemed from bondage. The wailings of the Egyptians and the exultation of Miriam's song had scarcely died upon their ears; the bread from heaven and water from the rock were still sweet upon their lips; the solemn covenant with their redeeming God was hardly ratified; Moses was still with Jehovah upon the terrible mount; when the people came about Aaron like a mob, crying, Up, make us a god to go before us. That

weak man, perhaps, hoped to put them off by demanding the sacrifice of their golden ornaments. But they were bent upon iniquity. So the calf was made, doubtless of wood, covered with plates of gold, and finished with a graving-tool. And they shouted before it, This is thy god, O Israel, which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt.

I. *The Idolatry.* What was the meaning of the idol? We are accustomed to think of image-worship as an entire rejection of the true God and choice of a false deity. But this does not seem the fact here. The people borrowed from Egypt the symbol of its chief divinities, and set this up as an image of Jehovah. Our version reads, Make us gods; but the word is Elohim, used elsewhere for the true God, being put in the plural, according to the Hebrew idiom, to give dignity to the object. They did not call it Apis, Isis, or Mnevis. Why should they turn to a deity that had just been humbled before their own? They called it the god that had brought them up out of Egypt, whom they knew to be Jehovah. Still more distinctly in appointing the festival, Aaron said, To-morrow is a feast unto Jehovah. The calf, therefore, was to stand for Jehovah, as did the two calves which Jeroboam set up in Israel to keep the people from going to Jerusalem to worship. They wanted a visible representation of the Invisible One, something they could look at and touch, which they could surely find in its place when they wished to offer sacrifices or ask favors. Perhaps all idolatry originated in this seemingly excusable desire to aid worship by making the unseen Being more real to the senses. But it has always sunk into the grossest heathenism, in which, to the mass of the people, the idol is the god. Israel sinned through unbelief. If the invisible Jehovah was to control their lives, he must continually assert himself by direct interpositions. When the miracles ceased, the thunders died away, Moses and his rod disappeared, their faith also vanished. It was as if he had ceased to rule. They had no faith, only sight. Very stupid and wicked, doubtless; but what better is the unbelief of to-day, which cannot—that is, will not—believe