

and nation? God has not dealt with any nation as He has with us, and yet the spirit and philosophy of our day is strangely godless. The golden calf is in the market place and in the schools."—(Exell.) "Have we made any calves? Ah, many. We have been great at idol making." Can I count the calves we have worshipped? The unholy catalogue: Pride, fashion, gluttony, self-indulgence, wealth, station, influence, appearance—all calves of our making—calves of gold."—(Parker.)

Here our lesson omits a few verses. They should be read and pondered. God speaks to try Moses and also to manifest His detestation of the sin of Israel. He threatens to destroy the nation, and making Moses a second Abraham, wait till a new nation sprung from him shall be worthier of the covenant promises. Utterly unambitious and unselfish Moses pleads with God. A sensitive regard for God's own honor inspires him with a holy boldness and his prayer is heard. The people are spared before they have repented because Moses interceded for them. Carrying with him the two tablets inscribed with the law by God's own hands, he rejoined Joshua who awaited him (24: 13). Drawing near the camp, but not yet in view of it, the sound of the idolatrous revelry rose to their ears. The young soldier's first thought was of battle, but the calmer and better judgment of Moses rightly interpreted the confused uproar. Moses could plead with God for Israel, but to see the unholy rites of calf worship moved his deepest indignation. He cast away the precious tablets and hastening into the midst of the people upbraided Aaron, destroyed the calf and executed vengeance upon the chief offenders.

III. INTERCESSION. 30. Ye have sinned—They had been severely punished and now began to show penitence. (1 Sam. 12: 17-25; Luke 15: 18.) **Peradventure**—The sin seemed now so heinous that he almost doubted whether it could be pardoned. He is looking at it now from a different point of view from that taken when pleading with God. **Make an atonement**—He hoped that he might be the means of bringing about a reconciliation with God. He would intercede with God for them.

31. Moses returned—Went up again into the cloud at the summit of the mountain. (Deut. 9: 18.) He makes no excuse for the people. He confesses their guilt and pleads for unmerited mercy. He is overwhelmed with horror at the enormity of their guilt. (Ex. 20: 23.)

32. If thou wilt—Note the unfinished sentence. (Gen. 4: 8; 1 Sam. 12: 14; Luke 19: 42.) It seems too much to ask for, he only dares hint at it. **Thy book**—"The book which Jehovah has written is the book of life,

or of the living. (Ps. 69: 29; Dan. 12: 1.) This expression is founded upon the custom of writing the names of the burgesses of a town or country in a burgess-list, whereby they are recognized as natives of the country, or citizens of the city, and all the privileges of citizenship are secured to them. To blot out of Jehovah's book, therefore, is to cut off from fellowship with the living God, or from the kingdom of those who live before God, and to deliver over to death. As a true mediator of his people, Moses was ready to stake his own life for the deliverance of the nation, and not to live before God himself, if Jehovah did not forgive the people their sin. These words of Moses are the strongest expression of devoted self-sacrificing love."—(K. and D.) Compare (Rom. 9: 3.) (Ps. 56: 17; 139: 16; Phil. 4: 3; Rev. 3: 5; 17: 18; 21: 27; 22: 19.)

33. "The infinite love of God is unable to withstand the impurity of such love. God, who is holy love, cannot sacrifice the righteous and good for the unrighteous and guilty, nor can he refuse the mediatorial intercession of his faithful servants. **Whosoever hath sinned**—The nation as a whole will not be destroyed. (Ezek. 18: 4.) God will deal with individuals on their personal deserts.

34. Mine angel—(33: 2, 3, 14; Num. 20: 16.) The angel of the covenant, the Son of God. This was a gracious promise. (Ex. 23: 20; 33: 2, 14; 20: 16; Josh. 5: 13, 15; Isa. 63: 9.) **In the day when I visit**—"Moses had obtained the preservation of the people and their entrance into the promised land, under the protection of God, through his intercession, and averted from the nation the abrogation of the covenant; but the covenant relation which had existed before was not restored in its integrity. Though grace may modify and soften wrath, it cannot mar the justice of the holy God. The punishment therefore was not remitted, but only postponed in the long suffering of God, 'until the day of retribution', or visitation. The day of visitation came at length, when the stiffnecked people had filled up the measure of their sin through repeated rebellion against Jehovah and his servant Moses, and were sentenced at Kadish to die out in the wilderness."—(K. and D.) Another view of this expression is that future backslidings were treated as repetitions of this first offence and as aggravations of it. The Jews have a saying that in every affliction of their people there is an ounce of the powder of the golden calf. (Deut. 32: 35; Rom. 2: 5, 6.)

35. The Lord plagued the people—This refers to the whole series of chastisements which befel the people because of their innate proneness to idolatry. We have no mention of any special scourge at the time.

LESSONS. 1. We should never compromise with sin. 2. God knows everything we do and is angry at wickedness. 3. The prayers of the righteous often secure mercy for the transgressors. 4. Every one must answer for himself before God. 5. God is ready to pardon sin, but he chastises the sinner so as to make him hate it.