

Papapostolou, JennySacred Smallness

8. Settling for Golden Calves

This chapter argues that idolatry is not an archaic problem but a present one. An idol is anything that takes God's place in your heart. Using Israel's golden calf at Sinai, the author warns that even good, God-given things become idols when they become the object of worship instead of Jesus.

Key takeaways

- An idol is anything more important to you than God — it need not be sinful; often it's a good gift misplaced.
- Israel saw God's glory on Sinai yet made a calf because they grew impatient waiting for Moses. Idols are convenient; they demand no accountability.
- Emotional/outward experiences (feelings, music, lights) become idols when we require the feeling to believe God has moved. Faith trusts He is present even when unfelt.
- Honoring anointed leaders is right; idolizing them — obeying their voice over God's, holding them to perfection — wrecks faith. No person belongs on God's throne.

- Fame and influence are tools for the Gospel, but become calves when they become the goal. Prioritize faithfulness over fame, fruitfulness over influence.
- Comfort is an idol when prayers stay self-focused; Scripture calls persecution and suffering for Christ an honor.
- Even a God-given dream or vision can become an idol if we cling to our version over His daily leading. 'If I have Jesus, I have enough.'

Passages worth keeping

“Honor is hearing the message someone brings and receiving it with respect and discernment. Idolizing is obeying their voice over the voice and leadership of God.”

Defines the line between honoring leaders and idolizing them.

“If He is not Lord of our lives, someone or something else is.”

Sums up the whole chapter's claim — there is no neutral throne.

How it connects

The chapter reframes the First and Second Commandments for modern believers: the calf isn't gold anymore but feelings, leaders, fame, comfort, and even ministry dreams. The test is always the same — does this share the throne that belongs only to Jesus?

Scripture referenced

- **Exodus 32:1-6** -- The golden calf — the chapter's central story of impatient idolatry.
- **Revelation 2:4** -- Leaving your first love.
- **Matthew 6:24** -- Cannot serve two masters — God or mammon.
- **1 Timothy 5:17** -- Elders worthy of double honor — right honor vs. idolizing.
- **James 1:12** -- Blessing on those who persevere under trial.
- **Philippians 3:10** -- Knowing Christ includes sharing His sufferings.