

Engagement Project - Tour 8 Articles

Articles: [EP-Tour 8, Engagement - The Royal Sacrifice, Part 1](#) - ~400 words, ~1200 words

The Engagement Project

Tour 8: Engagement - The Royal Sacrifice

The Scriptures are the consummate book of understatement. With devastating economy they can say in half a sentence what would take us lifetimes to grasp and centuries to recover from. One of those understated sentences is John 15:12—“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” We call it the Royal Law, yet for most of us it functions more like the Royal Suggestion.

Del Tackett, in Tour 8 of The Engagement Project, refuses to let us walk past it unchanged. He begins with a piercing question: Why have we ignored the Royal Law? Is it ignorance? Have we simply never been taught the height and depth of Christ’s love? Or is it the ancient work of lies and counterfeits—the serpent still whispering that God is holding out on us? Or is it plain selfishness, the old man clinging to the throne of his own heart? Tackett offers a fourth possibility that lands like a sword between the ribs: maybe we have thought little of how much Christ actually loves us.

To drive the point home, he takes us to a dinner party in the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7). A notorious woman crashes the gathering, falls at Jesus’ feet, and begins weeping so hard that her tears wet His travel-worn feet. She wipes them with her hair, kisses them, and pours priceless perfume over them. Simon is scandalized. Jesus, however, is moved. He tells a short parable about two debtors—one forgiven a small debt, one an astronomical debt—and then asks, “Which of them will love him more?” Simon grudgingly answers, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” Jesus nods. “You have judged correctly.” Then, looking at the woman but speaking to Simon: “Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven—for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

From there Tackett leads us into the garden called Gethsemane—the “oil press.” The symbolism is not accidental. Jesus tells His disciples, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death.” The Greek is stronger than most translations let on: His soul is encompassed, hemmed in, crushed by sorrow. We naturally assume the sorrow is over the physical torment ahead—the mockery, the crown of thorns, the scourging, the spikes, the slow suffocation of crucifixion. Those horrors are real, but they are not what is killing Him in the garden.

Hours later the real agony erupts. Hanging between earth and heaven, Jesus utters the cry that should never have been possible: “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”—My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? For the first and only time in eternity, the Son experiences the horror of separation from the Father. The everlasting communion of the Trinity is broken. The Father who loves the Son with infinite, unmediated delight turns His face away, because the Son has become sin (2 Cor 5:21). The wrath that should fall on us for eternity falls on Him in that moment.

But here is where the understatement of Scripture detonates into eternity. Because God is not trapped inside time the way we are, this moment is not limited to three hours on a Friday

afternoon. Tackett leans heavily on Revelation 13:8—Jesus is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” In the eternal counsels of the Godhead, the sacrifice was already accomplished before Adam drew breath. C.S. Lewis’s image is helpful: imagine the entire timeline of history as a single line drawn on a page. We creatures crawl along the line, one moment at a time. God stands above the page and sees the entire line at once. For Him, the cross is not a past event; it is eternally present. The scars Thomas touched are still visible at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The cry still echoes.

An old story from the church illustrates the weight. A little boy once asked his Sunday-school teacher, “What does it mean that Jesus was forsaken?” The teacher, a man named James, tried to explain substitutionary atonement. The boy listened, then asked, “But did it hurt Jesus’ feelings that His Father turned away?” James was undone. Years later he wrote, “I have never preached the cross the same again.”

Tackett tells another story that breaks us open. After the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, a father ran to his son’s school, only to find the building flattened. For days he dug through rubble while others gave up and encouraged him to also repeatedly. Finally, on the third day he heard his boy’s voice. The son had kept telling trapped classmates, “My dad will come—he always does.” When the father lifted the last slab, the boy shouted, “See, I told you!” Tackett pauses, then quietly asks: Do we know the Father came for us? Do we realize the Son was willing to be forsaken so that the promise of Deuteronomy 31:6—“He will never leave you nor forsake you”—could be irrevocably true for us?

Isaiah had seen it six centuries early: “His appearance was marred more than any man... He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows... He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities” (Isa 52–53). The disfigurement was not merely physical; it was the disfigurement of love willingly becoming the object of divine wrath.

We return, then, to the woman at Jesus’ feet. She loved much because she knew she had been forgiven much. The Pharisee loved little because he thought he needed little forgiveness. The difference between a lukewarm Christian and a white-hot lover of Jesus is not willpower; **it is vision**. Have we seen the depth of the penalty paid? Have we heard the eternal cry? Have we understood that the scars are still there because the love is still there?

Frederick Lehman’s hymn tries to say it:

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

And Stuart Townend’s modern hymn says this:

How deep the Father’s love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son

To make a wretch His treasure...
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer.
But this I know with all my heart:
His wounds have paid my ransom.

If we ever truly see the Royal Sacrifice—the eternal, Trinitarian, wrath-absorbing, scar-bearing, hell-shattering love of Christ—we will never again treat the Royal Law as optional. Loving one another “as He has loved us” will cease to be a burdensome command. It will be the only sane response left in the universe.

That is the understated thunder of Tour 8. The cross is not just something Jesus did. It is who He eternally is for us: the slain Lamb who loved us and gave Himself for us—forever.

[back to top](#)

The Engagement Project

Tour 8: Engagement - The Royal Sacrifice

The Bible is the consummate book of understatement. In a single sentence it can hide oceans of truth that, once seen, shatter us forever. One of those understatements is the Royal Law: “You shall love one another as I have loved you.” We have sung about it, preached about it, printed it on coffee mugs—yet somehow we live as though it were optional.

Why have we ignored the Royal Law? Ignorance? Lies and counterfeits? Selfishness? Or have we simply thought little of how Christ has loved us?

Del Tackett presses us to the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee. A broken woman pours out tears, perfume, and worship. Jesus turns to Simon and says, “He who is forgiven little, loves little.” The inverse is also true: those who grasp how much they have been forgiven cannot help but love much.

Then we walk to Gethsemane—“oil press.” There the Son of God is crushed. Not merely by the prospect of physical torture (though that was real), but by something infinitely heavier. “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death.” Hours later, nailed to the cross, He cries the unthinkable: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

For one eternal moment the everlasting fellowship of the Trinity is ruptured. The Father turns away; the Son becomes sin. This is no mere three-hour event bracketed by history. Because God is omnipresent—outside time as well as in it—that cry echoes forever. Revelation calls Jesus “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” In the courts of heaven, the scars are still visible. The sacrifice is eternally present.

C.S. Lewis pictured time as a single page in God’s book; He sees the whole story at once. From before Genesis to beyond Revelation, the Son is the slain Lamb bearing our names. That is the depth of the penalty paid—and therefore the depth of the love shown.

A little boy trapped in the rubble of the 1988 Armenia earthquake told classmates, “Tell my dad he’ll come for me—he always does.” Days later, the father lifted the final stone and heard his son’s voice: “I told them you would come.” The Father did come. And the Son was willing to be forsaken so that we would never be.

He who was disfigured beyond recognition, who bore our pain and carried our sorrows, whispers still: “I did this because I love you.” If we finally see it—if we are stunned by the cost—we will love much. The Royal Law will no longer be a command we struggle to obey. It will be the song we cannot stop singing.

[back to top](#)