



BOLD TO SPEAK THE MYSTERY

Volume 3

Issue 1

PRIMER ON AGAPE LOVE

Introduction

If the first most important truth in Romans is the revelation of the Righteousness of God in saving His enemies **from** their **sins** through the Person and Work of Christ on the Cross **unto** Justification (Rom. 1-5), then the second most important truth is the Righteousness of God in saving believers **from** **Sin** through the Person and Work of Christ on the Cross **unto** Sanctification (Rom. 5-8). While the former begins and ends with FAITH AND GRACE (Rom. 1:6, 5:1-2), the latter begins and ends with GRACE AND LOVE, (AGAPE) LOVE (Rom. 5:2-10, 8:38-39).

Rom. 5-8, opens with God commending His (Agape) Love toward us, in that while we were yet ungodly sinners on enemy status before Him, Christ died for us. The indwelling Holy Spirit now ministers that (Agape) Love, the Love of God displayed at the Cross of Christ, to us by pouring it out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5, 10)! And it closes with God declaring that nothing, Absolutely Nothing, NOT EVEN GOD HIMSELF, can separate us from Christ and His (Agape) Love!

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who (Agape) Loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor prin-

icipalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the (Agape) Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Rom. 8:37-39)

We might say that this whole passage, Rom. 5-8, is wrapped in the warm blanket of (Agape) Love.

WHY (AGAPE) LOVE?

One question we need to answer up front is: Why do we include the Greek word “Agape” along with the English word “Love?” After all, the Greek word for Grace is “Charis,” but we don’t constantly refer to Grace as (Charis) Grace. The reason we say (Agape) Love and not just Love is because the Greek language has many specific words for various kinds of love that are all translated into the English with just one general word—Love. For instance:

“Eros” refers to sexual-LOVE,

“Philia” to brotherly-LOVE,

“Storge” to familial-LOVE,

“Philautia” to self-LOVE,

“Xenia” to friendship-LOVE.

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These were the most commonly used words for love in the Greek language. But the Greeks also had another word for love that was little used, and that word was AGAPE, and God took this little used Greek word Agape, which didn't contain much meaning of its own, and claimed it for Himself, filling it full of His Own divine meaning that encapsulated the Love He displayed at the Cross of Christ for ungodly sinners on enemy status before Him. Therefore, to prevent confusing this Love with other Greek words for love we say: (Agape) Love!

THE PATTERN FOR AGAPE LOVE

Paul's Pattern for Agape Love comes from the descent of Christ in service to others as described in Phil. 2.

Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, and took *upon Him* the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name. (Phil. 2:5-9)

We can think of this Pattern of Christ in self-giving service to others in this way:

ALTHOUGH: Christ possessed the status of being absolute God with all its rights and privileges

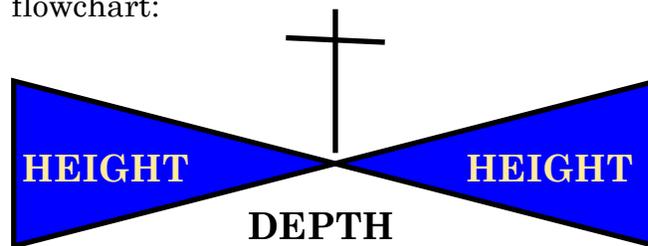
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NOT: He did not consider it something to be grasped for Himself ...

BUT: Something to be used in a self-giving way for the benefit of others.

- A. He made Himself of no reputation, took the form of a servant by coming in the likeness of humanity.
- B. He was found in human form, humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the Cross.

We can also look at this as something of a flowchart:



Even though Christ was in the highest HEIGHT (as absolute God), He willingly descended to the lowest DEPTH (even the death of the Cross). Then God exalted Him to the highest HEIGHT (above all).

Paul calls this Pattern of Christ and His Cross the Mindset of Christ, and goes on to say that this is also the mindset believers need to have today if they are going to serve God selflessly for the sole purpose of building up others in Christ.

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of (Agape) Love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, ² fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same (Agape) Love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let

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each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴ **Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.** ⁵ **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.** (Phil. 2:1-5)

ALTHOUGH: Believers had been drawn in to the very life of the whole Triune Godhead—the consolation of Christ, the (Agape) Love of the Father and the fellowship of the Spirit ...

NOT: They are not to use this status for selfish ambition and their own interests ...

BUT: In humility, regarding others better than themselves, serving for the benefit of others.

This is the mindset that all believers are called upon to cultivate. Today, in the Dispensation of Grace, God is not forcefully subjecting His enemies to His rule, and neither should we. One day Christ will return in His Wrath and Judgment, and His friends will reign as kings, and He will destroy His enemies, ... but that is not what He is doing today. Today, He is offering His Grace and Peace to His enemies so that He might save all who believe, and as believers, that is our mission as well. We serve God by humbly serving others, following the Pattern of Agape Love and the Mindset Christ had when He went to the Cross.

THE DEFINITION OF AGAPE LOVE

If that is what we might call the mechanics of (Agape) Love, then what might be a working definition for it? A good starting point is Paul's Letter to the Corinthians, who were involved in many things that demonstrated a

lack of (Agape) Love, and it is there that we find (Agape) Love defined most completely. Let's start with God's and Paul's Love Poem in 1 Cor. 13. After preparing the ground in 1 Cor. 13:1-3 by explaining that anything done apart from (Agape) Love on the inside—no matter how good or eloquent or self-sacrificing it appears on the outside—is just noisy, vain, empty, worthlessness before God, Paul writes these beautiful words:

(Agape) Love suffers long and is kind; (Agape) Love does not envy; (Agape) Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ (Agape) Love never fails. (1 Cor. 13:4-8)

With this in mind, let's refresh our memories about what we read in Phil. 2 about (Agape) Love: **But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Phil. 2:3-4).** Paul picks this concept up in 1 Cor 13 when he says, **(Agape) Love does not seek its own.** But this phrase begs another question. If we are not supposed to seek our own things, whose things are we supposed to seek? Paul had already answered this question earlier in 1 Cor. 10.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. LET NO ONE SEEK HIS OWN BUT EACH ONE

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THE OTHER'S WELL-BEING.

(1 Cor. 10:23-24)

And again:

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

(1 Cor. 8:1)

So, the basic definition of (Agape) Love would go something like this: (Agape) Love doesn't seek one's own things (selfishly gaining things for oneself). Rather it seeks the things of others (selfless giving) for the sole purpose of building them up in God's Truth for today, the Body of Christ's Mystery Truth as revealed to and through the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:25), even if it means giving up some of our own rights and freedoms.

And we do this by following Paul because he is the one following Christ in the Pattern of (Agape) Love.

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: ³³ even as I please all *men* in all *things*, NOT SEEKING MY OWN PROFIT, BUT THE PROFIT OF MANY, that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

(1 Cor. 10:31-11:1).

And finally when Paul closes this letter and summarizes its content, he writes:

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all *that you do* be done with (Agape) Love. (1 Cor. 16:13-14)

The Mindset of Christ going to the Cross and the Pattern of (Agape) Love should be the mindset and pattern of every believer in his or

her walk and service before God. The goal set before us is that everything the believer does, every word and thought and act, should be tempered with Grace and flow out of (Agape) Love. Anything "done" on that basis is acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

Well, if everything we are to do is to come from (Agape) Love, we had better know where Agape Love comes from. It is certainly NOT self-generated, and it is not a feeling. It is something God must give to us. But how does He do that?

The (Agape) Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. ⁶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous *man* will one die: yet peradventure for a good *man* some would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commends his (Agape) Love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. ¹⁰ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

(Rom. 5:5-10)

There are two very important truths presented here.

1. God displayed His infinite (Agape) Love once-and-for-all when He sent His Son to die on the Cross for ungodly sinners on enemy status before Him. We won't find (Agape) Love in our circumstances or our feelings or our emotions or our situation in life or in things going on around us or in

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the wisdom of the world or human knowledge. We find (Agape) Love when we look at Christ and His Cross because there He gave Himself for us, while we were without strength and ungodly, rebellious sinners, His enemies. But He died to save us anyway!! He did all that! God the Son left the heavenly heights and descended making Himself of no reputation, taking on the form of a servant, came in the likeness of humanity, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Phil. 2:6-8). And He did all of this for sinners, for you and for me. That is the one and only source of (Agape) Love: The Love of God displayed at the Cross of Christ.

2. As we look and believe and appreciate and enjoy the Love of God displayed at the Cross of Christ, the Holy Spirit takes that (Agape) Love and overflows our hearts with it, re-creating us from the inside for selfless service unto God.

This is the way God motivates and empowers: **For the (Agape) Love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead.** (2 Cor. 5:14). And anything “done” on the basis of Agape Love, is “done” by God working in and through us to will and **to do His good pleasure** (Phil. 2:13), giving us the Fruit of the Spirit, which is (Agape) Love.

Of course, the corollary of this is that anything not “done” on the basis of Agape Love is not “done” by God working in and through us and is, therefore, not pleasing to Him.

Let’s look at a few examples of how Paul operated his ministry following the Pattern

of Christ and His Cross and its Mindset of Agape Love.

Agape Love In Action: The Pauline Pattern

Philippians 2:19-24: Paul and Timothy

But I (Paul) trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you (the Philippians), that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. ²⁰ For I have no *man* likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. ²¹ FOR ALL SEEK THEIR OWN, NOT THE THINGS WHICH ARE JESUS CHRIST’S.²² But ye know the proof of him (Timothy), that, as a son *with the father*, he hath served with me in the gospel. ²³ Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. ²⁴ But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. (Phil. 2:19-24)

Let’s use the Agape Love Pattern:

ALTHOUGH: Paul had the right to have Timothy serve him, and Timothy had the right to minister to Paul ...

NOT: They did not exercise those rights, not seeking their own things ...

BUT: They sought the things of Christ, the Gospel and the Philippians. Paul would send Timothy, and Timothy would go.

Philippians 2:25-30: Epaphroditus

Yet I (Paul) supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he

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that ministered to my wants (needs).
²⁶ For he longed after you all, and *was* full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him ... ²⁸ I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and *that* I may be the less sorrowful ...
³⁰ because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding *his* life, to supply your lack of service toward me. (Phil. 2:25-30)

ALTHOUGH: Paul had the right to keep Epaphroditus to meet his own needs, and even though Epaphroditus had the right to not travel after he had been deathly ill ...

NOT: Neither Paul nor Epaphroditus considered their own things ...

BUT: But considered the things of the Philippians. Paul gave up Epaphroditus' service, and Epaphroditus went to Philippians.

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved. ² I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that *they* be of the same mind in the Lord. (Phil. 4:1-2)

ALTHOUGH: These women were considering their own things, causing division in the assembly ...

NOT: They should stop because it is hurting the assembly ...

BUT: They should have the same mindset Jesus Christ had when He went to the Cross to die for them.

1 Corinthians 6:1-8: Going to Roman Law

ALTHOUGH: The Corinthians had the right to go to the Roman law courts ...

NOT: They should not go to them because it is a wrongdoing against a fellow believer.

BUT: Be willing to be wronged and defrauded if it prevents a wrong from being inflicted on the assembly.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13: Paul and Food Rights

ALTHOUGH: Paul had the right to eat all foods ...

NOT: He did not eat anything that would offend a weak brother ...

BUT: In selfless (Agape) Love he gave up that right to build up and establish others in the Lord.

1 Cor. 9:1-19: Paul and Apostolic Rights

ALTHOUGH: Paul had the right as an apostle of God to be supported by the Corinthians...

NOT: He did not exercise these rights if it hurt a fellow believer or compromised the message...

BUT: In selfless (Agape) Love, he served others to gain the more for them.

1 Cor. 9:20-23: Paul and Adaptability

ALTHOUGH: Paul had the right to enjoy his freedom in Christ ...

NOT: He did not always exercise these rights ...

BUT: In selfless (Agape) Love did what would win the most people possible to Christ.

I think you get the picture. Through Christ, believers were brought into the family of God under the headship of Christ where

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everything that belongs to Christ belongs to the believer (Rom. 5:11-24). God placed them into Christ, identifying them with His Death, Burial and Resurrection (Rom. 6:1-5), gave them access to the Riches of His Grace (Rom. 5:1-2), made them the recipients of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3) and seated them together with Christ in the Heavens (Eph. 2:5-9)! This MUCH MORE SALVATION went far, far, far beyond the minimum or anything we could have imagined. God didn't just restore our old humanity, giving us a clean slate and another chance. He made us a new creation in Christ, taking us to the Highest Heights together with Christ!

But we must not forget that Rom. 6 also identifies us with the Lowest Low: We were also crucified together with Christ (Rom. 6:6), and this is what characterizes our walk and service as we live life from the moment we were saved to the end of our lives through either death or the Rapture. The victory of being placed in the Highest Height together with Christ came at the cost of Christ going to the Lowest of Lows, death, even the death on the Cross, where He displayed for all eternity the infinite Love of God: The AGAPE LOVE of God.

Just as Christ was willing to leave the heights of Heaven and use His things for the benefit of others; just as Christ was willing to give up the exercise of His rights and privileges as God to come down to this sin-cursed world, suffer all things, even unto death, for His enemies; so too, believers are "beseeched" to follow that Pattern of Service with the Mindset of Agape Love.

Here is how Paul tries to explain this in Gal. 2:20:

I was crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who (Agape) Loved me and gave Himself for me!

Christ opened His arms and descended down, down, down to share His riches through self-giving, not using His own rights and privileges for His Own benefit but for the benefit of others. That's Agape Love. So too, we, as His crucified people who serve a crucified Christ risen from the dead, are to have this same mindset of Agape Love. We, whom God has taken up to the HIGHEST OF HEIGHTS through Christ and made us the recipients of the Riches of God in Christ and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, we are to walk and serve God down here, on this sin-cursed, death-decaying world, under adverse conditions, as Christ's ambassadors, dispensing His Grace and Peace to ungodly sinners on enemy status before Him. He didn't leave us here to just be the receptacle of His riches (as the Corinthians wrongly thought) but to be the dispensers of His riches as well, dispensing His Grace and Peace to a lost and fallen world.

Anything done in this Pattern with this mindset of Christ in faith; anything done in self-giving service that is motivated by the Love of God at the Cross of Christ to build-up others in God's truth for today (ie., Agape Love), anything, ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING done in this way, is always apart from sin and death, and is always, ALWAYS, united to God and His righteousness. This is how we "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). This is how we "serve in newness of Spirit" (Rom. 7:6). The Christian life is not trying to reach

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some level of morality or boasting in oneself or abstaining from doing certain sins. The Christian life is serving God by serving others in Love. The pagans could be moral, and unbelievers can abstain from certain sins. But only those who have received the Love of God at the Cross of Christ by faith (ie., believers) can operate on the basis of Agape Love. **This is (indeed!) faith, which works by (Agape) Love** (Gal. 5:6).

WHY IS AGAPE LOVE THE ONLY ANSWER?

The reason Agape Love is the only motivation for the Christian walk and service is because the sinner's biggest problem isn't that they commit "sins" (as bad as that is). Our biggest problem is that we are enslaved to indwelling Sin, which results in what Jeremiah called the deceitful heart (Jer. 17:9), and what Paul described earlier in Romans as the foolish and darkened heart (1:21), the unrepentant and hardened heart (2:5) and, for the Jews, the uncircumcised heart (2:29). The biggest problem for fallen humanity is not that they have an external "sins" issue, but that they have an internal "Sin" issue. They have a HEART issue.

They don't just need to have their "sins" forgiven (as wonderful as that is!) and be given another chance to do better. They need a new HEART in which the Spirit can dwell rather than Sin, where He can work to produce the believer's walk and service. Religious systems say fallen humanity is inherently good inside and just needs to do fewer sins on the outside to be acceptable to God. But God and the Bible say fallen humanity is inherently bad inside, because they are enslaved to Sin and unable to do anything that pleases God (Rom. 8:8). Fallen humanity has chronic HEART failure disease.

A new heart filled with (Agape) Love is the only solution to this problem. After Rom. 1-2, we don't read anything about the HEART until we get to Rom. 5:5. First Paul had to explain justification by grace through faith in Romans 1-4 and just before he starts explaining Sanctification by grace through faith in Romans 5-8 he writes this:

... and hope maketh not ashamed; because THE (AGAPE) LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD (POURED OUT) IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WHICH IS GIVEN UNTO US. ⁶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous *man* will one die: yet peradventure for a good *man* some would even dare to die. ⁸ BUT GOD COMMENDS HIS (AGAPE) LOVE TOWARD US IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. ⁹ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. ¹⁰ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

God's answer to mankind's sinful heart problem is not to cover it up or pretend it isn't really there. Rather, He creates the heart anew by filling it up and overflowing it with the infinite Love of God displayed at the Cross of Christ, Agape Love, where Christ died for ungodly sinners on enemy status before Him. It is in this newly created heart that the Holy Spirit is able to dwell, working in and through the believer to produce a walk and service that is well-pleasing to God.

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In Philippians 2, Paul, after showing the Agape Love of God in Christ's descent to the death on the Cross in service to others (Phil. 2:6-8), and after explaining that it is this mindset of selfless Agape Love for others that believers must have to serve God in a way that pleases Him (Phil. 2:1-5), he goes on to say: **For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure** (Phil. 2:13). And when that happens, that's the true Christian Walk that is acceptable to God.

It is acceptable to God because God produces it Himself, making it possible for believers to do what they could not do before they were saved. For the first time, having been equipped with a new heart and having been given the indwelling Holy Spirit to reside there, the believer can now truly, purely and sincerely obey from the heart! Paul is so amazed by this that he cries out: **But God be thanked! That ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the HEART that form of doctrine to which you were delivered** (Rom. 6:17).

Note carefully that this new ability to obey from a heart of faith occurred because they were handed over to a **form of doctrine**. In Romans 1 fallen humanity had been handed over to the evil lusts of their own foolish and darkened hearts under the power of Sin that resulted in Death—separated from God and unable to do anything pleasing to Him (Rom. 1:18-32).

God's answer to that handing over of fallen humanity in Rom. 1 is another handing over in Rom. 6. Here we learn that God has now handed redeemed humanity over to a **form of doctrine** that provides for obedience from the

HEART. Before we were all the servants of sin and death. **BUT NOW** through this "handing over" we became the servants of Righteousness and Life, ones who can now participate in the things of God.

What is this **form of doctrine**? It begins with being united to the **likeness of Christ's Death and Resurrection** (Rom. 6:5), which is Paul's proclamation of the Good News of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, what he called **his Gospel, the Gospel of Grace, the Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the Revelation of the Mystery** (Rom. 16:25). The Holy Spirit takes the preaching of the Cross, and the Agape Love for ungodly sinners on enemy status before God displayed there, and returns believers to God, gives them a new heart of Agape Love, which motivates and empowers them to walk and serve in a way that pleases God.

This **form of doctrine** is the preaching of Christ Crucified who is risen from the dead! We saw this earlier in Phil. 2:1-8. The true Christian life is molded by this form of teaching, which stamps us with the Pattern of Christ and His Cross, and gives us the Mindset of Agape Love that sent Him there. It is in this apparent weakness that we find the Power of God.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God ... For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴ but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of

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God. (1 Cor. 1:18-24)

Paradoxically, this is where the power of God explodes on the scene. This form of doctrine, the preaching of Christ Crucified who is risen from the dead, is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. Not just initial salvation but also ongoing salvation as we live out our lives as believers down here on enemy territory under adverse conditions unto God's Glory. No wonder Paul writes:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.
(Rom. 1:16)

THE PATTERN OF PAUL

While we are in Romans 1, let's look at one final example of the Pattern of Paul that is patterned after the Pattern of Christ and His Cross and the Mindset of Agape Love that sent Him there.

To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you, always in my prayers, ¹⁰ making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established; ¹² that is, that I may be comforted together

with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. (Rom. 1:7-12)

Let's follow the pattern:

1. The believers in Rome are "beloved" ("agaped") of God. They have received the Agape Love, the Love of God at the Cross of Christ (Rom. 1:7).
2. Paul as the preacher of Christ crucified who is risen from the dead, is thankful for all that God was accomplishing through Christ among the Romans, which was being proclaimed throughout the whole world (Rom. 1:8).
3. Paul's service in the preaching of the Gospel of His Son, the Good News about Christ and His Cross, comes from his "spirit"—a spirit created anew with Agape Love (his HEART) and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who motivates and empowers him to serve God by serving others (Rom. 1:9).
4. So, he talked to God continually about serving Him by serving the Romans (Rom. 1:9).
5. This caused him to not consider his own things but the things of the Romans and generated within him the strong desire to make the long arduous journey to visit them in person (Rom. 1:10-11).
6. His selfless purpose was to give them a spiritual gift that would establish them once-and-for-all, building them up in Christ. In Rom. 16:25, he identifies this spiritual gift as **his Gospel, the Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the Revelation of the Mystery** (Rom. 1:11).

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7. And the only thing he wanted in return was to be comforted together with them in their mutual faith (Rom. 1:12).

We see here a perfect vignette of the Christian life in action, based on the Pattern of Christ and His Cross, and propelled forward by the power of the Spirit and Agape Love. We might put it this way:

ALTHOUGH: Paul had the right to stay in one place and minister and not go on long dangerous journeys ...

NOT: He didn't exercise his rights, nor did he consider his own things ...

BUT: Instead he selflessly gave himself to the Romans so that they could be built up and established in Christ and all that God is doing today through Paul's apostleship.

That is what Agape Love does. That is the Pattern of Paul, who had been handed over to the form of doctrine we call Pauline Grace, which molded him in the Pattern of Christ and His Cross and gave him the Mindset of (Agape) Love. And that, and only that, is Victorious Christian Living that results in a walk and service that is well-pleasing to God!!

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1. 1 Cor. 1:23 2. Rom. 16:25 3. 2 Tim. 2:15

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