Romans 15: Glory to God in specific ministries

A ministry for all people: to live in unity

* If you were to do a survey of people on the street in Cambridge tomorrow, and you asked them “do you think unity between people is a good thing, and why?” what answers do you think you’d get?
* Paul continues with his theme of those with weak faith, and those who are strong, from the previous chapter. In these first few verses, how does he expand upon that?
  + *Not just a weak and strong thing but a universal principal*
  + So why has Paul specified the weak and strong so far? Especially considering this is written to a church which presumably contained both those who are weak and those who are strong?
    - *We all identify as those who are strong. In fact by living out our salvation we become strong. Feedback loop.*
  + In what ways are we strong and others weak? How can we live this out with our neighbours for their good, and to build them up?
    - Finances, service, relationships
* How does Christ’s example motivate this?
* How does the old testament motivate this?
* Paul takes the opportunity to expand on the role of the old testament. What does he want us to learn about the old testament scriptures?
  + *Relevance, points to Christ, leads to hope in us*
  + How do we see Paul using the old testament later in this passage?
* What does it mean that the people should have a ‘spirit of unity’? (v5)
* How does this unity come?
  + *Supernatural gift (v5)*
  + *Comes as we follow Christ (v6)*
  + *Based on Christ’s acceptance of us (v7)*
  + How does this relate to the instructions we’ve had over the previous chapter up to here about bearing with the weak, pleasing our neighbours, and following Christ’s example?
* **What is the purpose of this unity?**
* **How does this view of the motivation, means of reaching, and purpose of unity differ from what we see in society today?**
  + *God-centred not human centred. (Human-centred unity is seen in Genesis 11 - Babel)*
* Why do you think Paul suddenly brings up this idea of Christ being the ‘servant of the Jews’?
  + *Objection to Christianity at the time – “Jesus only ever ministered to the Jews”*
* How does this argumentation live on today in and outside of the church? What barriers between people do we still set up today?
* What is Paul’s response?
  + *Jesus became a Jew so that the gentiles could be brought in*
  + *Strong-weak – Jews were strong, and so were able to serve the weak gentiles*

Paul’s own ministry

* Paul has just written a long letter, full of doctrine and instruction, however we now see that the Roman church are actually doing quite well. For what does he complement them?
* **So what reason then does he give for having written this letter?**
  + *Because of the grace given to him*
  + *Glorifying God: bringing the people as a thanksgiving offering*
  + *As God is glorified, Paul himself experiences glory.*
  + What is the priestly image getting at here?
    - God-centred
* How does this work itself out in Paul’s priorities in his ministry?
  + How have people throughout history, and we ourselves, got our priorities wrong?
* How does his plan to visit Rome fit into this image of his ministry?
* What do we learn about the social responsibilities of the church?
  + How do social responsibilities relate to the preaching of the gospel?
    - *Saved for good works*
* What is the role of prayer in Paul’s work?
* Paul’s ministry was to bring the gospel to the gentiles. Looking at your situation, and the grace God has given to you, what ministries do you think God has given to us as the local church here at Eden, and to you individually in your life?
* How do the principles we’ve seen throughout this chapter apply to those ministries?
* How can we best support those around us in their ministries?