**“NO QUID PRO QUO”**

**Ephesians 4:11-16**

Have you ever had one of those moments where you all of a sudden realized something for the very first time? Or maybe you knew it already, but you saw it in a whole new light? Well that’s what happened to me this week. And I have Donald Trump and that whole supposed Ukraine phone call scandal to thank for it. You know the event I’m referring to, right? It’s been in the news for the last few months and the backlash over it is what is driving impeachment talks in congress. Let me summarize it for you. In July of this year President Trump made a phone call to Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the president of Ukraine. Democrats claim that in this phone call President Trump held back financial aid to Ukraine in the hope that its leader would investigate Joe Biden, the former US vice president who is seeking the White House in 2020. President Trump has from the beginning denied these charges. He made public a transcript of this phone conversation. He and his Republican allies say that this transcript confirms there was “no quid pro quo” agreement. Meanwhile the Democrats argue that the phone transcript shows there was such an agreement and therefore proves that the president abused his power. Thus, all the calls for impeachment and the ongoing “circus” being played out on in the media.

So what exactly is meant by that term, “no quid pro quo”? Well, “quid pro quo” is a Latin term which means “something for something.” In other words, a favor for a favor. “If you’ll do this for me, then I’ll in turn do this for you.” In the case I just referred to President Trump claims there was “no quid pro quo,” in other words, that he did not withhold financial aid to Ukraine in an effort to force their president to investigate Joe Biden and any wrongdoing that may have taken place on his part as it relates to his son. So the Trump claim is that there was “no quid pro quo” in his phone conversation with the Ukranian leader. There was no exchange of favors. I’ll do this for you – give you aid – if you’ll do this for me – investigate Joe Biden. No Quid Pro Quo.

So the question you’re probably asking yourself at this point is what does this have to do with Ephesians? Well, let me explain.

As I thought about all that stuff that’s been going on something dawned on me. This idea – no quid pro quo – hits at the very definition of grace. There is no quid pro quo in the economy of grace. In other words, we don’t do anything to earn our salvation. Grace is God’s unmerited, unearned favor. It’s a “free gift.” We did nothing to deserve it and we can’t do anything to keep it. It isn’t like God said, “I’ll save you, but in turn you need to do something for Me.” No, God saved you. And God saved me whether we do anything for Him or not. No quid pro quo.

By the way this is at the very heart of God’s love for us. It’s unconditional love. He loves us no matter what. He loves us even if we don’t love Him back. Most of us Christians really understand this doctrinal truth. But I need you to hear me... Our relationship with God, which is based on His grace thru our faith in Christ – Eph 2:8, “for by grace have you been saved thru faith” – that relationship works both ways. On God’s part there is no quid pro quo. Our salvation is not contingent on us doing anything for Him. But from our end there is no quid pro quo either. We cannot say, “God, I love you and I accept your gift of salvation because of what Christ did for me on the cross, but only if You do this for me ---” If You don’t come thru I’m done with You! If my marriage ends or if my loved one dies, then I’m finished following God.” No, on our end there must also be no quid pro quo. We must be able to say, “God, I believe in You, I trust You fully and I will follow You based on Who You are and the grace You have shown me in saving me even if you never do another thing for me the rest of my life!” No quid pro quo. It works both ways. That’s grace. That’s love.

Here’s my point for saying all of this as we continue our study of Ephesians: if you’ll read and study Ephesians thru the “no quid pro quo” lenses it will help you to better understand what God expects of us. Given all the wonderful doctrine we saw in the first 3 chapters, what then does God want from us? What is His desire for us in the last 3 chapters? We don’t do any of the things Paul’s going to be talking about as a contingency for our salvation. Nor do we do any of them hoping then that God will bless us. We do them because God wants us to. We become more like Christ because that’s God’s desire. We let God have full control of our lives – Eph 3:19, Paul’s prayer – because it’s God’s will. No quid pro quo.

So let’s read our passage. It’s a short passage today, just 6 verses. READ Ephesians 4:11-16.

V 11, The “He” here is speaking of who? If you go back to v 7 you’ll see that it is “Christ’s gift” so the “He” here is Jesus. “He gave” speaks of the gift. Who was the gift given to? Again v 7, “to each one of us.” To the church. Last week I pointed out that He gives the church spiritual gifts. How many of you know what I’m talking about when I say “spiritual gifts”? They’re discussed at length in Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, 1 Pet 3 and here in Eph 4. “Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by God to each member of the body of Christ, according to His grace for use within the context of the body.”

Here in Ephesians Ch 4 Paul is pointing out to us specific gifts related to church leadership. In the church God gifts men and women He has called to specific tasks of leading the body. He mentions four such gifts in v 11: apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd-teachers (in the Greek not two separate words but combined into one word). Why did Jesus give us these gifted leaders? V 12 provides us with the answer…

“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”

He doesn’t do this to increase numbers of members (though that may happen). Not to entertain us with clever and interesting sermons or lessons (though there could be some of those). Not so they’ll go out and witness for us. Not to represent us effectively each year at the SBC. Not to organize us. Gifted leaders equip US, the saints for the WORK of ministry. As Paul puts it, “for building up the body of Christ.” We the saints do the work of ministry. If you’re a Christian God has called you to the ministry.

So what does it mean to “equip the saints”? V 13 expounds on this – they lead us (1) to unity, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith.” They lead us to (2) “the knowledge of the Son of God.” They lead us (3) to become spiritually mature, “to mature manhood.”

How do these church leaders lead us to unity, knowledge and maturity? Elsewhere in the N.T. when Paul addresses the issue of church leadership he says such things as, “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2); He says, “being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed” (1 Tim 4:6); He says “I pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith” (1 Thess 3:10). Two essential elements for equipping the saints are (A) preaching/teaching God’s word with sound doctrine and (B) prayer. These lead us, v 13, to being a unified body, to a deeper knowledge of Christ (this produces personal fellowship with Him, as Eph 3:17 says “that Christ may dwell in your hearts thru faith”) and to maturity, “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” In other words, becoming more and more like Jesus.

V 13 is God’s desire for us. It is His vision for the church. You want to know God’s will for your life. There it is. Eph 4:13.

There are several characteristics that mark a mature believer. I want you to do your own self-assessment as we go thru these one at a time.

First mark of a mature believer, v 14 – “no longer [are you] children, [being] tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” If you have spent time reading and studying the Bible and know what God’s word says, then you should have formed sound doctrine. You should know what God wants. You won’t be spiritually ignorant. You won’t be led astray by all sorts of false doctrine floating about out there on the airwaves and internet. Who are the most susceptible people to cults? Those who are ignorant of God’s word. Those whom Paul refers to as “children.” The immature believer.

The second mark of a mature believer, v 15 says, is one who openly shares their faith with others. “Speaking the truth in love.” You say the right thing and you have the right attitude, an attitude of love. We need to have both. And this is a biproduct of becoming spiritually mature, more like Christ – we “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”

The third mark of a mature believer, v 16, is one who serves as part of the body of Christ, actively involved in some way in spiritual service in the local church. “From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

Three marks of a mature believer – (1) read, study, know and apply God’s word; (2) speak the truth of God’s word in love; (3) involve yourself in spiritual service in the local church. So, application, let’s be honest with ourselves. How are we doing in these three areas? How well do we know and apply the Bible? Are we openly sharing our faith with those God leads across our path? Are we serving, functioning within the body of Christ? Maybe if you’re really honest with yourself you might say, “I really need to work on that area or those areas or all three areas.”

This short passage in Ephesians Ch 4 tells us what God wants from His church. My goal as your teacher is not for you to leave here this morning and beat yourself up. My goal isn’t to rile you all up. My goal is to get you to think a little, to simply point out what God’s word says. You work it out in your own life with the Lord. None of this stuff we’ve talked about this morning is a condition of your salvation. Your faith in Christ has saved you. Your soul is eternally secure no matter what you choose to do from this point forward. Just be aware what your Savior and Lord’s vision for you and His church is. Then little by little move yourself toward that. Finish well. Finish the race no matter how difficult things may get!

To close we’re going to do something a little different this morning. We aren’t going to sing. I’m going to show you a video. The quality is not the best and for that I apologize. But hopefully you’ll be able to see it OK.

Derek Redmond is a 400m sprinter at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. He has high hopes. The previous year at the world championships he helped lead his UK 4 x 400m relay team to a gold medal beating out the favored USA team. Redmond as he prepares to race here has one of the best 400m times in the world. He’s hoping to medal at this event in the Olympics.

The date is August 3, 1992. It is a semifinal race. In the previous 2 days leading up to this Derek Redmond won his previous 2 heats advancing him to the semifinals. In doing so he beat out a runner from Japan in one heat and a runner from Cuba in the other. The way the heats work is that the top times advance to the next round. The two men Derek Redmond beat out in his two heats, they also advanced and they are both in his semifinal race. The top 4 times automatically advance to the Olympic finals 2 days later. Derek Redmond is fully expected to be one of the top 4 that will advance.

***Play Video***

Things didn’t quite work out the way Derek Redmond expected. What happened to him demonstrates what the Christian life is sometimes like. Hebrews 12 says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (12:1-2) We’re in a race. And we have a goal – to finish the race that has been set before us. And the prize that we are after is Jesus, the One who has authored our faith. It’s all about Him.

During our race things may happen that we didn’t plan for – sometimes unexpected things, disappointment, pain, even tragedy. It’s all part of the race whether we like it or not. But Paul exhorts us to run the race with endurance. Don’t be distracted by circumstances. Focus on Jesus. Finish the course! The Lord provides us what we need to finish. Maybe, as the video showed, that will be a person who will come along beside you with their arm around you and walk with you. You still need to keep moving because the race isn’t over. But that person will be right there with you encouraging you. And then sometimes you need to be THAT person, the one who goes out onto the track and walks alongside someone else who’s struggling. This video illustrates that for us.

History records that Steve Lewis of the US won that heat in a time of 44.5 seconds. Three other runners advanced with him to the Olympic 400m finals. Two of three were the runners from Japan and Cuba that Derek Redmond had beaten in his two heats. The point is that Derek Redmond likely would have advanced to the finals had he not gotten hurt. Maybe he would have won his Olympic medal and maybe not. But that’s not really the point. What happened happened and he finished the race. None of the 65,000 spectators in the stands that afternoon in Barcelona noticed Steve Lewis or the other runners as they crossed the finish line. Their eyes were fixed on the two men in our video – Derek Redmond and his father. And when Derek Redmond came across the finish line in a time that wasn’t even recorded, all 65,000 – that cloud of witnesses – were on their feet cheering and applauding. And so it will be with us some day.

This video gives us a good picture of the Christian life. A race. It’s what Paul had in mind when he told Timothy just before he crossed his own finish line, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Tim 4:7-8)

Finish the race! Remember, you are NOT RUNNING ALONE. You have other brothers and sisters to help you along the way. And maybe, just maybe, you’ll be able to help some of them as well. “No quid pro quo.” We are not seeking to get something back in return for what we do. Rather, we are motivated by our love for them and for Jesus.