

“Goodbye, Farewell and Amen”

There are several “goodbyes” in the Bible. Some of the notable ones are from Moses to the people of Israel and the same from Joshua years later. In the N.T. there is Jesus’ goodbye to his disciples at his ascension and Paul’s goodbye to the elders at Ephesus. Here is another goodbye from the Bible.

2 Kings 2:1, 5-14 - “When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal . . . Then the group of prophets from Jericho came to Elisha and asked him, ‘Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?’ ‘Of course I know,’ Elisha answered. ‘But be quiet about it.’ Then Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to the Jordan River.’ But again Elisha replied, ‘As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you.’ So they went on together. Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River. Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground! When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away.’ And Elisha replied, ‘Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor.’ ‘You have asked a difficult thing,’ Elijah replied. ‘If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won’t.’ As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha saw it and cried out, ‘My father! My father! I see the chariots and charioteers of Israel!’ And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress. Elisha picked up Elijah’s cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. Then Elisha returned to the bank of the Jordan River. He struck the water with Elijah’s cloak and cried out, ‘Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?’ Then the river divided, and Elisha went across.”

Colossians 1:9-10 - “So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.”

My first hope and prayer is that all of you would seek to grow in knowledge and wisdom so that your lives would be transformed more and more into God’s vision for you, and so that you would be people who transform your corner of the world into the place God means it to be.

Second, I pray that you would follow, encourage and support Nhu Nguyen as your new pastor and the board of elders who serve you well.

When Paul was on his final trip to Jerusalem, he stopped in Asia Minor, near Ephesus, and called the elders of that church he had served to come to him. He said many things to them. Among them are these words I share with the elders and you all today.

Acts 20:26-28 - “I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it’s not my fault, for I didn’t shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know. So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock - his church, purchased with his own blood - over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders.”

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 - “When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn’t use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God’s secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness - timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.”

I leave you with these simple words, from Paul, as he concluded his farewell to the elders at Ephesus.

Acts 20:32 - “And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.”