

Sermon Notes

Romans 16:27b

"Amen"

A Sermon Series on Romans

June 30, 2019

Introduction

- 1) Since September 2016 we have had over 70 sermons on Romans.
- 2) Today's sermon is on the very last word in Paul's magisterial epistle: ἀμήν (*amén*).
- 3) This isn't much of a surprise, since "amen" is a common word in the Christian faith.
 - a) It is found 30 times in the Old Testament (OT) and 129 in the NT (for the NASB).
 - b) "Amen" ends three psalms and five NT books. (Ps 41; 72; 89; Romans; Galatians; 2Peter; Jude; Revelation – and thus the Bible itself.)
- 4) The English word "amen" is from the Greek word "ἀμήν" (*amén*), meaning "verily, truly, so let it be," which is from the original the Hebrew word, "אָמֵן" (*'amen, aw-mane*).
 - a) This root Hebrew word from which "amen" comes is very rich and complex.
 - b) It comes from the word "אָמֵן" (*'aman, aw-man*), "to confirm, support, uphold (Qal); to be established, be faithful (Niphal); to be certain, i.e. to believe in (Hiphil)"

"Amen" in the Bible

- 1) Amen is used as a statement of agreement. 1Kgs 1:36; Jer 11:5-6
 - a) Example: *"Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, 'Amen! Thus may the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say.'" – 1Kgs 1:36*
 - b) So when we say "amen" we are bearing public witness that we agree with the statement.
 - c) This is no trivial thing, especially when it comes to the things of God.
 - i) We are commanded not to speak falsely about God. (3rd Commandment) Ex 20:7
 - ii) To "amen" something that is contrary to God's revealed will as found in Scripture is a grave thing.
 - iii) Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, *"For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."* – Matt 12:37
- 2) The earliest usage of "amen" is from two sections of the Torah, ("the Law"), the first five books.
 - a) **Numbers 5:22** – Is about a civil/ceremonial law from the Old Covenant to test a woman who has been accused of adultery.¹

¹ Remember the civil (government rules for ancient Israel) & ceremonial laws (rules for OT worship) are fulfilled by Christ and thus they have been abrogated (i.e. "to abolish by authoritative action"). So we in the NT church are not supposed to follow them. We do not obey these OT commands because we "have to get with the times," "they don't work for us today," or that we get to pick and choose which parts of God's Law we are supposed to follow! That would be rebellion, blasphemy and idolatry. We do not obey them because the NT commands we don't! For example, sacrificing animals to make atonement with God, which is commanded in the OT, would be a blasphemous rejection of Christ's perfect work on the cross in the New Covenant. The OT ceremonies were mere "shadows and figures" of the reality we have in Christ. They are helpful, however, because we learn about the mind of God, His holiness, our fallen state, the need for Christ, and as a broad guide for the general equity for the church and society. See: Matt 5:17-20; Rom 9:31-32; 14:1-15:1; 2Cor 5:17; Gal 3:23-25; 6:15-16; Eph 2:13-16; Col 2:13-17; Heb 7:22; 8:4-13; 9:15; 12:24; 1Pet 2:13-16.

- i) As the OT priest explains the test, the woman agrees to the Lord's judgment by saying, "Amen. Amen."
- ii) When you say "amen" to, and about, the Lord you are not only agreeing with God but also submitting to His will and judgment.
- b) **Deuteronomy 27:15-26** – Of blessings and curses.
- i) Israel, God's OT people, just before they are to go into the promised land, gather before two twin mountains called Gerizim and Ebal.
- ii) They are to build a stone altar, offer sacrifices, and write on the stones the Law as a way to renew and reaffirm the covenant made first on Sinai. Deut 27:4-8
- iii) *"Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, 'Be silent and listen, O Israel! (An important first step before one amens!) This day you have become a people for the LORD your God. You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.'" – Deut 27:9-10*
- iv) What follows are a list of curses for disobedience, Deut 27:15-26; 28:15-68
as well as blessings for obedience. Deut 28:1-14
- v) In the list of curses in Deut 27:15-26 (today's Call to Worship) the people say "amen" agreeing and submitting to the Law and God's judgment.
- vi) Question: Can you say "amen" to all that Scripture teaches?
- Agreeing to and submitting to its teaching?
 - Which includes rightly understanding the relation between God's Law and Gospel?
- 3) "Amen" became a common feature of Jewish and Christian corporate and private worship.² 1Chr 16:36; Neh 5:13; 8:6; Ps 106:48
1Cor 14:16; 2Cor 1:20
- a) For example: When David brought the Ark of God into Jerusalem.
- i) The king ordered the priests to offer a psalm of thanksgiving, 1Chr 16
followed by the people saying "amen."
- ii) The end of the psalm reads:
"Then say, 'Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us and deliver us from the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name, and glory in Your praise. Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting.' Then all the people said, 'Amen,' and praised the LORD." – 1Chr 16:35-36
- b) In the NT it seems to have become a standard part of corporate worship.
- i) *"Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?" – 1Cor 14:16*
- ii) This seems to teach the congregation it was to say "amen" as part of the worship.
- iii) Note, hearing and understanding what is said is critical to the amen.

² For early Christian references see: Justin Martyr, Apology, 1:65-67; Tertullian, De Spectaculis, 25; Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. 23.18; Theodoret, Ps. 105.48; Jerome, Comm. Gal. 1.2; Hippolytus, Trad. ap. 23.6; Const. app. 8.13.15; A. Jo. 94; Mart. Scill 17. For early Jewish sources see: 1QS 1:18-20; m. Berakoth 8:8; Tobit 8:7-8; Ta'an, 4.

- c) "Amen" is commonly a statement of praise when speaking about God and/or a concluding hope of prayer. Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; Gal 1:5; 6:18; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; 1Tim 1:17; 6:16; 2Tim 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1Pet 4:11; 5:11; 2Pet 3:18; Jude 25; Rev 1:6-7; 5:14; 7:12; 19:4; 22:20
- i) For example, Paul uses it 5 (or 6) times in Romans.
 - ii) Rom 1:25 – *"For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."*
 - iii) Rom 9:5b – *"the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."*
 - iv) Rom 11:36 – *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."*
 - v) Rom 15:33 – *"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."*
 - vi) Rom 16:24* – *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*
(* = Some ancient manuscripts do not have this verse.)
 - vii) Rom 16:27 – *"to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen."*

Amen and the Divine

- 1) The most profound use of "amen" is when it is used for, and by, God.
- 2) For God Himself is the amen, the "so be it."
 - a) Is 65:16 – *"Because he who is blessed in the earth will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth will swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My sight!"*
 - b) The phrase "God of truth" is found only here in Isaiah 65.³
 - i) It literally reads "the God of amen."
 - ii) In the Vulgate (the Latin Bible) the phrase is beautiful: *"in Deo amen"*.
 - c) If there is no God, there is no amen, no truth, nothing that is "so be it."
(i.e. no universals: goodness, truth, logic, beauty, reason, justice, etc.)
- 3) God's mercy and redemption, the "so be it" of salvation is only found in Christ.
 - a) This was the plan from the very beginning. Matt 25:34; Eph 1:4
 - i) As Christ speaks about Himself in Revelation 3:14b . . .
 - ii) *"The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God"*.
 - iii) Not only salvation, but all of creation is through Christ.
 - b) Because all things are only through Christ, and His righteousness covers us, He is our "amen" to God!
 - i) Christ perfectly sanctifies (i.e. "makes holy") our lives and worship.
 - ii) For good theology ends in doxology (giving worship & glory to God).
 - iii) *"For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." – 2Cor 1:20*

³ The "God of truth" in Ps 31:6 is different in the Hebrew. In Ps 31 it's the "God of faithfulness." In Isaiah 65 it's literally "the God of Amen."

- 4) We have such assurance because of who Christ is and what He has done.
- a) This is seen by His use of "amen," which is extraordinary and highly unusual.
 - b) Amen is normally used in a response to confirm and agree with what has been said.
 - i) Such as agreeing with a biblical truth, especially about God.
 - ii) Or concluding a prayer as a means of submission and hope.
 - c) To "amen" your own statement is a bit strange, if not arrogant.
 - i) To amen someone saying "this church needs elders" makes sense.
 - ii) To state "this church needs elders, amen" is a bit bold and maybe arrogant.
 - iii) No one would begin a sentence by saying "amen" and then give their opinions.
 - This would mean everything you say is a "so be it."
 - This would be blasphemous, unless one was God incarnate (in the flesh).
 - This is exactly what Jesus does through the Gospels!
 - d) Throughout the four Gospels Jesus frequently says "truly I say to you."⁴
 - i) In John's Gospel we see our Lord would frequently "double down" and say it twice, "truly, truly, I say to you."⁵
 - ii) The word "truly" is literally, "amen."
 - e) To give one example: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."* – John 6:47
 - i) In the original Greek:

ἀμήν	ἀμήν	λέγω	ὑμῖν,	ὁ	πιστεύων	ἔχει	ζωήν	αἰώνιον.
amen	amen	I say	to you	the	one trusting	has	life	eternal.
 - ii) Did you hear our Lord's first two words? "Amen, amen . . ."
 - iii) What follows is the Gospel (trusting in Christ for eternal life).
 - iv) We know this is true because the Son of God has first declared, "Amen!"

Conclusion

- 1) To say "amen" to something is to say a lot, especially about the things of God.
- 2) When you say "amen" in church you are publically, and before God, saying you agree with what is said, and will be judged by it.
- 3) To "amen" what is false is a grave sin, whether spoken, or in thought, or in deed.
- 4) To "amen" the things of God is good and godly, but to do it as a hypocrite is condemning.
- 5) However, for those who know our "amen" is not in ourselves, but Christ, there is full assurance.
- 6) Thus we can "amen" as the end of all Scripture does: *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."*
– Rev 22:20-21

⁴ To cite only the references in Matthew: 5:18,26; 6:2,5,16; 8:10; 10:15,23,42; 11:11; 13:17; 16:28; 17:20; 18:3,13,18-19; 19:23,28; 21:21,31; 23:36; 24:2,34,47; 25:12,40,45; 26:13,21,34.

⁵ John 1:51; 3:3,5,11; 5:19,24-25; 6:26,32,47,53; 8:34,51,58; 10:1,7; 13:16,20-21,38; 14:12; 16:20,23; 21:18.