

What Does 'Amen' Mean?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 April 2019

Preacher: Thomas Davis

[0 : 0 0] As many of you will know, over the past week we've been doing our seven days of prayer, which is something that we do twice a year in order to try and encourage us and remind us of the centrality and importance of prayer in our lives as individual Christians and in our life as a congregation together.

While it's really good to focus on prayer for this week and while it's good to have reached the end of that week, I want to make sure that I don't give the impression that now that it's finished we should stop praying because the opposite is true.

In many ways we want our seven days of prayer to just be a boost and a catalyst to help us grow further in our prayer lives as a congregation because it's so important that prayer remains at the very heart of our life as a church and our lives as individuals.

Prayer is something we need to do every day. Prayer is something that we need to think about as a church all the time and prayer is something that we want to work at and it's something that we want to invest in.

Today I want us to focus on a word that is probably always in your prayers and it's always probably the last word of your prayer and that's the word.

[1 : 2 9] Amen. We're going to turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter one and we're going to read these two verses that are on the screen. For the Son of God Jesus Christ whom we proclaimed among you, Sylvanus and Timothy and I, was not yes and no but in him it is always yes and then verse 20 in particular for all the promises of God find there.

Yes in him that is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory. We say amen all the time in church but why do we say it and what does it mean?

That's what I want us to think about a wee bit today. When I was young I remember being told that amen means so be it and in many ways that's true. It makes sense at the end of a prayer you're saying amen, so be it, let it be so and that's not wrong.

That's a good, very good starting point but as with many, many other things in the Bible there's kind of more to it than that and if we look more closely we'll see that this wee word amen is an absolutely amazing word.

I want us to start off by looking at five verses and there's three and then there'll be two more on another slide. Deuteronomy 32 20 he said, I will hide my face from them I will see what their end will be for they are a perverse generation children in whom there's no faithfulness.

[3 : 0 0] Isaiah 65 16 so that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth. Jeremiah 11 5 that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers to give them a land flowing with milk and honey as it is this day then I answered so be it Lord.

John 8 58 Jesus said to them truly truly I say to you before Abraham was I am and then Revelation 3 14 to the angel of the church and Leo to see a right the words of the amen the faithful and true witness the beginning of God's creation.

Every word there's an every verse there's an underlined word and each of these underlined words is the word amen in all of those different verses and so seeing that immediately tells us that amen is more than just so be it.

It's a very rich and deep word and it's well worth studying so what exactly does it mean? Well amen is one of the few Hebrew words that have transferred across to English and the Old Testament was written in Hebrew the New Testament written originally in Greek there's tons and tons and tons of Greek words that have come into English but there's hardly any Hebrew words that have come from Hebrew into English.

One of them is amen the only one other one that I know is camel so who knew that camel Hebrew word you knew a bit of Hebrew there may be some more but that's the ones I know now Hebrew words work a wee bit differently to English words and I think it's going to be helpful for us just to think about that for a moment in Hebrew you have what you call a basic root which is usually a combination of three letters and then lots of other words are kind of built on that root so it's almost like you've got a kind of foundational group of letters and then lots of other words are built on that.

[5 : 06] The word amen comes from a root that basically means to be firm or to be able to give support okay so if you can see that there the idea of being firm solid able to support so in second Kings you've got a related word that's used to describe pillars okay so you look at these pillars here you think they're firm they're able to give support that's that's part of this word this amen word family in Numbers chapter 11 it's the word fact the word is used to describe a parent's strong arms holding a child again you see the idea of firmness support holding a child so that they're safe and secure so that that amen word family is basically conveying the idea of being firm or solid and from that Hebrew is then able to express various other things so you have the concept of reliability so firmness is something that you can rely on it's a reason to be sure of something that's why we had the word faithfulness in that verse from Deuteronomy it also conveys the idea of truth so again you think about it if something's true then it's dependable it's reliable it's firm and stable you also get the idea of agreement and so that's why when you say amen you're expressing commitment and agreement to what's being conveyed to you you're saying that that's that's firm that's certain and it also conveys the idea of faith sorry I meant too far there conveys the idea of faith or trust so again if you think about all you people upstairs right you are trusting those two pillars aren't you because if those pillars can't hold you up well in fact no it's not you people upstairs it's the people under the balcony who are trusting those pillars because they're going to be even even more trouble if these pillars aren't able to hold you up but there's that idea of trust isn't there you are you are putting your faith in the firmness and stability of something and so when it says in Genesis 15 that Abraham believed the Lord it's the same word family that that word believed comes from and that makes perfect sense Abraham is believing the Lord he's convinced that what

God is saying is firm it's secure it's trustworthy and from that we get the idea of seriousness which is what we saw from the example of Jesus's words when he said truly truly or in the old version he used to say verily verily in Greek he said amen amen and it's basically conveying the idea what this is these words are solid they're firm they're reliable you need to take them seriously so when you hear that word amen I want you to be thinking in terms of firmness certainty and reliability and on that basis I want to ask the question what does that teach us about prayer because we associate the word amen with prayer and we will very often almost always end our prayers with the word amen and what I hope we can see is that this idea of firmness that lies behind the word amen is immensely helpful for us to bear in mind when we think about our own prayer lives because when you say amen you're doing more than just telling everyone that your prayer is finished and you're doing even more than simply saying so be it amen is an incredibly important word and briefly

I want to give five reasons why that's the case so number one amen reminds us of the absolute firmness and reliability of God when you say amen it's a bit like you're standing on a solid rock those of you who like going walking in Scotland particularly those who maybe go walking in winter time very often it's a kind of squelchy experience you can go walking through the hills and the ground can be boggy and soft and you wobble you slip you stumble you stretch but as you go along if you find a rock it's completely different if you get your feet on that solid rock beneath you you are stable and secure and your whole experience changes when we pray we are stepping onto a rock we are stepping onto God himself he is a place of total stability a place of security and safety and so when you say amen I want you to be thinking in terms of standing on solid safe stable ground because that is where we are when we pray we are on solid ground in fact we can never ever be on firmer and more solid ground than we are when we pray to God every time we pray we are resting on his consistency his power his strength his reliability and that's such a comfort for us as we go through the kind of chaos and instability of life you can go through a week and you're just constantly swamped by pressures by busyness by all sorts of things that knock you and can often leave you feeling as though you're sinking and yet the word amen is reminding you that there is a solid rock right beside you all the time and he's just a prayer away and so when you say amen you're saying to God Lord you are firm and secure number two amen reminds us that we can lean on God as we were saying amen it's the same word family is the word for pillars so the idea of giving support if you look at these pillars they are taking the weight of the roof and of the balcony and there's pillars below us taking the weight of this floor these are holding up the weight that's placed on top of them and that's a very comforting and important thought because so often we can feel weighed down by the burdens that we carry so we worry about our loved ones we feel the pressure of work we go to our inbox tomorrow morning and you kind of wince because you think oh man there's so much to do already we can feel concerned about our finances we have the stress of work and life and all the busyness that brings and we can have feelings of failure or as Don prayed about and expectations that haven't gone the way we hoped all of these things can leave you feeling so weighed down and yet all the time God is saying to you I'll take the weight that's exactly what Jesus said when he said come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest he said I'll take the weight and so when you say amen I want you to think of it as if you are placing the weight of all these burdens on to God we're casting our cares onto him as 1 Peter chapter 5 tells us so as we pray we can pour out our every worry our frustrations

our fears or disappointments our concerns our burdens and our amen is reminding us that God will take the weight of these we can leave all our burdens with him so always really important to remember that prayer is much more about giving to God than about getting from God as soon as we think of prayer and we think well it's just about asking God for stuff well it's not really like that and in many ways it's far more about giving to God and in prayer we want to give God our best so we give him our praise our worship our thanks and our adoration we want to give him our very best but the amazing thing is at the same time God also wants us to give him our worst in prayer in the sense that we give him all of our worries all of our fears all of the stuff that's really hard in life and he's ready and willing to take the weight so when you say amen you're saying to God

Lord please take the weight of this for me number three amen reminds us of the seriousness of prayer I hope that already we can see that that amen is not a casual word and Jesus makes that very clear for us because he uses it as his introduction to the statements that he made which were of the utmost solemnity and importance as he said amen amen I say to you whoever believes has eternal life and so when we say amen it should remind us that we're engaging in a serious business as we pray so prayer is lots of brilliant things prayer is amazingly accessible we can do it anytime any place at any age at any stage prayer is beautifully personal we come as we are and we are just completely ourselves before God prayer is wonderfully simple you're just talking to God that's all you're doing and and at the same time God listens to us to every word prayer is all these wonderful things but at the same time prayer is always always a serious business it's a serious thing prayer matters prayer is essential prayer is powerful prayer is precious and we must never ever forget that God takes our prayers immensely seriously God takes your prayers incredibly seriously now he's under no obligation to listen he doesn't need our prayers we've got no claim on his attention he's under no obligation to listen and yet he hears you with perfect attention and total devotion no matter how poor or needy we are the Lord takes thought of us and so our amen reminds us that our prayers are not casual and it reminds us that they're of the utmost importance to God and they're also a way of us to say to God that we are taking our prayers seriously so prayers not amen is not just this kind of like final sort of tick off the list at the end of a prayer it's a way of actually saying Lord I really mean this I'm serious about what I'm asking prayer is an astounding privilege and our amen should always remind us of that number four amen is a statement of understanding and agreement we see that often in scripture people use the word amen to say that they to express that they're in solemn agreement with what has been said we're going to see a very good example of this tonight because Derek is going to be preaching on Nehemiah chapter eight and you can see it here that in that chapter Ezra opened the book of the law on the side of all the people for he was above the people and he opened it and as he opened it all the people stood as a blessed the Lord the great

[17:19] God and all the people answered amen amen lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground the people affirmed the truth of what they were hearing and they expressed their agreement with the words that Ezra spoke by saying amen it's picked up later in the chapter at verse twelve they went away eating and rejoicing because they had understood the words that had been declared to them so that amen of the people was an expression of understanding of agreement and of commitment to the Lord so when we say amen when we read a passage of the Bible or if somebody is leading in prayer then we are expressing our understanding and our agreement with that and it's important to remember that because amen is not like a mystical or magical word it's about being firm solid and reliable it's about truth not about mystery so if somebody reads a passage of scripture when you say amen you're basically saying I'm standing on that and when someone prays and you say amen with that prayer you're saying I'm standing on the same ground and it's a great reminder that the Christian faith is not about vagueness or mystery Christianity is about solid clear firm truth and we saw that with the fact that amen and truth it's all part of the same word family in Hebrew amen is a way for us to say I understand that and I agree with it and I know that this is true that's why there's nothing wrong with saying amen in a service it can be out loud it can be in your heart but you're saying when you're hearing the word of God and saying amen you're saying I'm standing on that I am holding on to that as well and so when you say amen you're saying to God Lord I agree with you I am standing with you so amen reminds us of the firmness and reliability of God amen reminds us that we can lean on him amen reminds us that prayer is a serious business amen is a statement of agreement and of understanding number five amen is a statement of trust we said that when we were looking at the Hebrew word family the word Hebrew word for faith comes from the same family that makes perfect sense if something is firm if it's reliable if it's secure then we can trust it and so when we close our prayers with the words amen with the word amen we're making a statement of our trust in God we're saying that we're convinced of the truth of all that he said in his word that's why Paul highlights the certainty of God's promises in this verse he says all the promises of God find there yes in him that's why it's through him we utter our amen to God we're trusting in God's promises we're saying that we believe what he says we're also saying that we're committed to him we're not just affirming that his word is accurate we're actually personally committing ourselves to him and to what he says and so when we pray we're not putting God to the test we're not giving a half-hearted request we are wholly committing ourselves to him we're not just saying that he is the rock we're saying that he is our rock and we're standing on him and we're relying on him and when we say amen we're saying that we trust God to answer us we are expressing our understanding that he is sovereign and that we agree with his answer whatever that may be we're not demanding that our will be done we're saying that we know that God will do what's best so when you say amen at the end of your prayer you're saying

to God Lord I trust you and that's a brilliant way to always end our prayers so amen is an awesome word it's a really cool word it tells us about God that he is firm and reliable that he can take the weight of our concerns it tells us about ourselves that we are expressing our seriousness our agreement our commitment our trust and that's where we see that this word amen is actually binding us together with God it's conveying his commitment to us it's conveying our commitment to him it's pointing to the fact that we have a relationship with him as our God and that takes us back to the blue circle at the top in the middle there with this word amen conveys the idea of a parent holding a little infant in their arms because that's really what prayer is like you are the child running to your father independence and in need of his love and God is the amazing father who just takes you in his arms that are so firm and so secure and he holds you and keeps you safe it's an amazing privilege to be able to say amen to God it's expressing a relationship with him and it's reminding us of his commitment to us and as Paul emphasizes in the verse that we've been looking at or that we've been starting from that all of that is possible because of what

Jesus has done all the promises of God find their yes in him it's through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory so think of every promise that God has fulfilled in Jesus his promise to defeat evil his promise to cleanse us from sin his promise to gather people into his family from all nations his promise to dwell with us and his promise to be our God all of these are fulfilled in Christ it's in him that these promises find their yes and that's why it's only through Jesus that we utter our amen to God it's through Christ that we have a relationship with him and so that word amen is a reminder for you of everything that Jesus has done for you and that's why every time you say that word amen you are glorifying God it's expressing the fact that he has done so much for us through Jesus we're glorifying him because we're expressing our total dependence and trust in the one who's for him so amen is not just a wee word to end your prayer it's not just a wee word with which to end our service it's a brilliant word and it expresses so much key teaching in terms of a relationship with God but last of all it also raises a really important question about how you respond to the Gospel the Gospel is a message of God's promise to you it's a promise to save you if you trust in him it's a promise of eternal peace eternal security eternal joy a relationship of immeasurable love with God and with every other Christian as you sit here today God is promising that to you and he is offering it to you if you're not yet a Christian and the key question is can you put your amen to that offer so when God says that he has loved the world so much that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life can you put your amen to that in other words is that where you're standing is that where you're placing your security is that the rock on which you're building your life and it's so important to think about that because you really have to ask yourself you know who is getting your amen in life we read the question from the New City Catechism about idolatry and idolatry is trusting and created things rather than the creative for our hope and happiness significance and security another way of saying that is idolatry is giving your amen to something other than God and I really hope you're not doing that today God is looking for your amen he's saying I will be your rock stand on me you'll be safe forever please please give him your amen let's pray dear God our father we thank you for the fact that you are the one source of stability and security that we can find we thank

you that you've poured out your love towards us in Jesus Christ that you have made and kept so many promises and as we stand before you today we want to give you a wholehearted amen and confess that that we need you and that we're committing our lives to you and without you we have nothing and so Lord we thank you that you are our strength and we thank you that we can come and pray to you and build our lives on you so please lead us all Lord in your ways amen