

## Why Don't We Say "Amen!" Anymore?

Let me be clear about one thing from the beginning: As a preacher, I'm not asking for more people to say "Amen!" during my sermons. **Instead, what concerns me is the relative silence that follows the conclusion of our public prayers... especially when the brother leading it does a thoughtful and fine job of praising, thanking, and entreating the Father on our behalf.** Where did the resounding affirmations of "Amen!" go? Are we still listening to, agreeing with, and internalizing and coopting these public prayers in which we are supposedly being led? Are we still adding our own personal affirmations to what has been prayed? And if not, why not?

First, let's be sure we know what "amen" means. The Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, defines "**amen**" as: "1 firm. 1A metaph. faithful. 2 verily, amen. 2A at the beginning of a discourse—surely, truly, of a truth. 2B at the end—so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled." But note the additional comments offered on the origin, usage, and derivation of "amen,"

"It was a custom, which passed over from the synagogues to the Christian assemblies, that when he who had read or discoursed, had offered up solemn prayer to God, the others responded Amen, and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own. *Additional Information:* The word "amen" is a most remarkable word. It was transliterated directly from the Hebrew into the Greek of the New Testament, then into Latin and into English and many other languages, so that it is practically a universal word. It has been called the best known word in human speech. The word is directly related—in fact, almost identical—to the Hebrew word for "believe" (amam), or faithful. Thus, it came to mean "sure" or "truly", an expression of absolute trust and confidence.—HMM"

Add to these definitions and derivations that the same word ("amen") is also often translated as "*verily*," so that when Jesus said "*Verily, verily...*" He most likely actually said "Amen, Amen." The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament with Semantic Domains (by Louw & Nida) further defines "amen" as a "strong affirmation of what is declared," which seems to coincide with the Lord's meaning when using the word to begin a particularly noteworthy divine statement.

Consider also what Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth, "*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 your are saying?"* 1Cor.14:16. Though the general and specific context of this verse is about speaking in an unknown tongue by the power of the Holy Spirit in public worship, for our purposes please realize that he is affirming the then common practice of those being led in prayer (by one brother) *responding at its conclusion with "Amen," thus making the substance of what was uttered their own*, as per the definition noted above (cf. Neh.8:6).

Now, if God's people affirmed their agreement and belief in, their support of, and their coopting of what has been prayed in petition to the Almighty, read from God's word, and preached concerning it, then why aren't we saying "Amen!" in our services when those same things are done? Whatever excuses we might make surely pale to the biblical precedent!

Admittedly, I have become lax myself concerning the once-common practice. But no more will I be silent, unless I couldn't hear or understand what the *pray-er* prayed, or I can't conscientiously "Amen" it, which are entirely different matters. With these exceptions noted, let's bring back the resounding affirmations of "Amen!" when we are led in public prayer! (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at [vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com](http://vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))