

## XX. The Apostles' Creed in Biblical Perspective

*"I Believe..."*

*"Amen!"*

II Corinthians 1:12–22

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Let's look at II Corinthians 1:15–22 which says, [12] *For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. [13] For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand— [14] just as you did partially understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you. [15] Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. [16] I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. [17] Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? [18] As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. [19] For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in Him it is always Yes. [20] For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His glory. [21] And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, [22] and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I know some of you know the basic means of delivering discipleship is in a small group. There is life on life in a small group because we learn horizontally and vertically as well with a discipler. Then there is one on one for a season and a reason but you may wonder if I actually meet with all the 400 plus small groups here at Briarwood. No I don't meet with all the small groups but there are a couple I do meet with yet in the expositional preaching of God's Word that is an initiating step in discipleship throughout a congregation. As God's Word is expounded in public preaching it's the trigger of discipleship for it presents things that can be built upon in the small group and in one on one. If there was ever a sermon which was a clear area of discipleship and focus it's this one.

This particular study while addressing the matters of theology that is the doctrine of God, Christology which is the doctrine of Christ, soteriology which is the doctrine of salvation, etc., the reality is this study is very focused in the practicality of the life of every believer in worship and witness. It is something Biblical that I believe needs to be understood. I feel so strongly about this that I would ask you to go to your family and friends who haven't heard this study to go listen to it or read it from our website because this needs to be understood and embraced in life.

This is our 20<sup>th</sup> study of the Apostles' Creed. It was fashioned in the first and second century and probably put together in the span of 50 to 70 years but not by the Apostles. It is known as the Apostles' Creed because it is the amassing of the essential Apostolic doctrine found in the New Testament books in terms of the foundational dynamics of the essentials of the Christian life. Not everything that is essential is in the creed so you will believe as a Christian

more than what's in the creed but you don't believe less than what's in the creed. I hope that if someone were to come to you and ask you about what the Gospel is that you would use this creed that's only 100 words (in Latin) to go over it with them. This creed is a foundational statement of the essentials of what is true in Jesus by which we are saved. It is appropriately in Trinitarian form. I want to remind you of the Apostles' Creed which is as follows;

***I believe in God the Father Almighty,*** (Doctrine of God/1<sup>st</sup> Person of the Trinity)

*maker of heaven and earth;*

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,*** (Doctrine of Jesus/2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity)

*who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,*

*born of the Virgin Mary,*

*suffered under Pontius Pilate,*

*was crucified, died, and was buried;*

*He descended into hades.*

*On the third day he rose again;*

*He ascended into heaven,*

*is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty,*

*and will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

***I believe in the Holy Spirit,*** (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit/3<sup>rd</sup> Person of the Trinity)

*the holy catholic church,*

*the communion of saints,*

*the forgiveness of sins,*

*the resurrection of the body*

*and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Of the 100 words, 75 of them are consumed in the second paragraph concerning Christ and they are focused not upon what He did but who He is and what He taught. This it moves to the third affirmation of the Holy Spirit pointing first to the Spirit's ministry on the finished redeeming work of Christ in the life of the church in the gathering of the holy catholic church, which means the church universal – the part made into the whole. This is looking at the church triumphant in heaven, perfect, and made up of the elect. None that Jesus redeems will be lost but all will be there in eternity resting from their labors in the presence of the Lord. Then it turns to the church militant on earth that is on mission, on message and in ministry in the communion of the saints as we labor together to fulfill the Great Commission and live the Great Commandment with a great commitment to Christ. Then it turns to the individual Christian with the last three blessings and then comes the conclusion to the creed – Amen.

This creed is modeled from all the creeds in the Bible and every creed in the Bible is there for three reasons. One as an instrument of worship, two as an instrument of discipleship and three as an instrument to protect the church and its purity of doctrine. The Apostles' Creed is an extra Biblical creed and its value is only found in its being faithful to the New Testament truth of what Christianity is. When you go to the Scriptures to believe in these basic truths, how does it end – Amen, why? In this study I'm going to answer three questions surrounding this ending. What is it? Why is it? And when is it rightly used?

Interestingly, as I began to prepare something astonishing happened to me. Here me out before you critique me on what I'm about to say. As I went through the study on this Biblical term Amen from God's Word I became convinced of something. If the Apostles, Paul in particular, were to visit a 21<sup>st</sup> century church I think they would be astonished. I would go so far as to say disappointed and there may be multiple reasons but there is one in particular. I think

they would be astonished and amazed at the dearth and the absence of the people engaged verbally in worship with the divinely commanded and provided word Amen and how it has become almost absent in the worship of God's people today. Is it appropriate? Should it be appropriate or should there be a recalibration? It shouldn't surprise us that they end this creed with a Biblical Amen because it is supposed to. In fact, it's a divinely provided word and commanded word. It is to be present and used.

So how have I come to this conclusion that it is to be used? In the preparation for this study is when I became absolutely convinced, amazed, astonished and to some degree convicted. I have even seen it in my own life over 50 years, the gradual absence of this word Amen. So should it be employed, embraced and enjoyed out of affection, allegiance and adoration to the God of glory? I'll leave that to you as I share with you a couple passages of Scripture. I want to look at I Corinthians 14. It was my time in this text that really challenged me. My purpose in sharing this text is not an exposition in sharing tongues, what is Biblical and what is not Biblical although Paul addresses that here. There's another purpose.

The Apostle Paul had administered for 18 months at Corinth and it was a ministry that was bittersweet. There were many who disliked him and many who loved him but when he leaves and is over in Ephesus he hears there is chaos in the church. There are multiple problems. They actually write him about seven of those problems and one of those was tongues. The pagan practice of unintelligible gibberish from the temple had made its way in the name of Apostolic gift of tongues and languages into the worship of the church. Paul begins to correct it and deal with it. My purpose is not to go through how he corrects it but I need to read it in order to get to what my purpose actually is in the text in light of the affirmation Amen at the end of the Apostles' Creed.

*I Corinthians 14:6–12 says [6] Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? [7] If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? [8] And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? [9] So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. [10] There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, [11] but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. [12] So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.*

Paul expects if someone speaks in tongues it will be in one of the known languages of the world though unknown to the speaker. Secondly, if God has given it then there will be someone there who knows that language which is why later Paul will say there has to be an interpreter with the witness of two or three. There is a reason for it as we see in Acts 2 when people heard others speaking in their own language. Paul says this unintelligible gibberish is not of the Lord or for the Lord because we worship what we know. An example is that we have three congregational communities that don't worship in this sanctuary with us on the Lord's Day morning because they are meeting in their own heart language. We have a Hispanic, Korean and Japanese congregational community. If there were with us, unless there was an interpreter, they can't participate. When they do join us we always do have an interpreter. Or if one of them were preaching we couldn't participate unless we knew the language or there was an interpreter and worship is intelligible. It is an act of knowledge and something done with heart and mind, in

practice together. If it was of the Lord it would contribute to edification of those who were present and would be able to understand it. Then Paul goes further with it in the text.

I Corinthians 14:13–19 says [13] *Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. [14] For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. [15] What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. [16] Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit (unintelligible language), how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? [17] For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. [18] I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. [19] Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

Paul is saying he has spoken in multiple languages but when he is there with them he doesn't want to speak in those languages but in the language they know even if he is only restricted to five words because he wants to communicate what edifies. This is where I want you to focus for as he corrects the problem he corrects it from certain anchor points. Number one is the priority of worship. If it detracts from God-centered worship it is not of God. Secondly, in God-centered worship He expects that people will be able to understand and will speak understandably because in worship God is praised and others are to be edified. Thirdly, He expects in a worship service, people who understand truth when spoken will respond with a particular word and that word is Amen. Worship is not only God to us and us to God, but it's us to each other and in dialogue that God's people will use the word Amen in the worship service.

Why would Paul expect the word Amen to be found in a God-centered worship service uttered by people in response to truth that they heard in that worship service? He would expect it for a very specific reason and that's because God provided the word and God has commanded the word. The word Amen is found 150 plus times in the Bible. It is not a Hebrew word translated Amen for that is the Hebrew word transliterated Amen. Amen is a transliteration of the Hebrew word *amen* [em'a]. In the Greek it's am-ane' and when translated into English there was no word for it so it was transliterated Amen. What does Amen always mean? It is a word of verification. It is a verbal verification of truth as truth. Dr. Schaffer used to call it true truth. What I just heard in the Scripture my response is Amen – so be it forever. It is forever truth. I affirm it, acclaim it and agree with it. This is the Word of God and it is true truth.

Let's now go back and look at II Corinthians 1. The church at Corinth was giving Paul a hard time. The only reason Paul didn't come was that God gave him the 'no' for he didn't say he was coming with yes or no. My dad and I had a running joke when I said 'would you like to play golf on Friday afternoon?' my dad would say 'yeah, put that down as a definite maybe.' I knew there was a possibility he may not be there. Let's look again at how Paul answers why he didn't come to them.

II Corinthians 1:17–21 says [17] *Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? [18] As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. [19] For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in Him it is always Yes. [20] For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His glory.*

Our Amen is a verbal affirmation, sign and signature that all of God's truth is yes in Christ. Today in our services we lit a prophecy candle, why? It was because 60 plus prophecies have been fulfilled in the birth of Christ. He has made other prophetic words. Everything He

has promised is yes and Amen, not because you or I have said it, but because Christ has said it and His Word is true, yes and Amen in Him.

He goes on to say in II Corinthians 1:21–22, [21] *And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, [22] and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

Here Paul is telling us we're saved in a covenant relationship with God and God has put a notary signature, a sign and seal on you for He has given you the Holy Spirit. He has sealed you in Himself. You who know Christ then put the verbal seal of your love for Christ before the Lord with Amen. We utter Amen to God, before the world, the saved and the lost. God's Word is true forever in Christ and we have built our life on it. What is in our heart comes out of our mouth so we verbally take the divinely provided word and declare it – Amen!

Why do we do it? We do it because God has commanded it. In Joshua 8 the people have crossed the river Jordan and have taken Jericho. They then disobeyed God by not doing what God told them to do for they went to get another town called Ai and they lost that battle as some were killed because of it. It was all due to their disobedience and the sin of Achan. Then they went up to Jacob's well which is in a valley and sits between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. On one mountain the Levites were commanded by God to stand and read the Law of God. On one mountain they read the blessings of the Law and on the other mountain they read the cursings of the Law. After the Law was read the people were commanded to say 'Amen' in the gathered worship service.

The reason this happens in Joshua 8 is it was commanded by God through Moses in Deuteronomy 27:11–26 which says [11] *That day Moses charged the people, saying, [12] "When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. [13] And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. [14] And the Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel in a loud voice:*

[15] *"Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret." And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.'* [16] *"Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [17] *"Cursed be anyone who moves his neighbor's landmark." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [18] *"Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [19] *"Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [20] *"Cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's nakedness." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [21] *"Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [22] *"Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [23] *"Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [24] *"Cursed be anyone who strikes down his neighbor in secret." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [25] *"Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* [26] *"Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'*

Why were they commanded to say 'Amen' after the reading of God's law? It is God's gift in a manner where you can respond to declare your affirmation, acclaim your adoration and agree with verification that God's Word has spoken. What is really interesting is where this word Amen is grounded and focused. I want to look at Revelation 3 where we see the seven

churches and in this text we get to the last church, the church at Laodicea. Revelation 3:14 says [14] “*And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.’*”

Who is He referring to? He is referring to Jesus. What is the name for Jesus? It is The Amen. Not only does God’s promises come from Jesus, not only are they yes and Amen in Jesus, but Jesus is The Amen. This overwhelms me for I know the profanity and blasphemy of my mouth and the Lord’s name prior to my conversion. Now in worship and before the world God allows me to honor His name by declaring all His promises Amen in Him and I’m actually using His name when I say that. God says to use His Son’s name in acclamation, adoration, affirmation and in agreement when you hear it and with what I have just heard in response.

When do you use the word Amen? You use it in response to God’s Word when God’s Word is read, preached and when prayers are faithful to God’s Word. Let’s look in Psalm 41. This Psalm ends with a doxology. Psalm 41:13 says [13] *Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.* It ends with a double Amen. The very next Psalm, Psalm 42 begins Book Two in the Psalms and if it begins Book Two the Psalm 41 ended Book One in the Psalms. There are four books of Psalms in the Bible and each one ends with a doxology with a double Amen.

So why do I point this out? It is because Amen, which is a name for Jesus, as all of God’s promises are yes and Amen in Jesus, come from Jesus and Jesus is the Amen. And God commands His assembled people to respond to the Truth with the Name of the Son of God that means ‘so be it forever.’ This is done when His Word is read. Secondly it is done when it is proclaimed. Thirdly, when it is sung. The Psalms are the divinely given hymn book and as you sing truth to God you end with the Amen. Fourthly it is used when you pray. Amen isn’t just the signal that you can open your eyes. Amen means that I have attempted to pray about everything that concerns me and I have brought it to the Father in the Name of His Son. I have been as faithful as I could to frame my requests according to His Word, Amen, so be it forever, as You answer according to Your Divine will.

I believe every prayer uttered in Christ’s name to the Father by the Spirit faithful to the Word, when it finishes we all enter in an Amen. Even in the prayer there may be moments of Amen. When we sing truth, end the singing of the truth with Amen. There may be moments you just want to say Amen. In the preaching and reading of the Word of God are times to say Amen. I have said on many occasions ‘And all of God’s people said...’ waiting for the Amen. I didn’t start that saying for God started that in Deuteronomy. Now if you’re not His people then you don’t want to say Amen and if you are you do. I actually get the opportunity to affirm God truth that comes from Jesus that is true in Jesus with the Name of Jesus, Amen.

That is why I believe Paul would be astonished at our almost abandonment of our Amen in 21<sup>st</sup> century Christianity. We know in worship from the moment those chimes strike until the benediction everything that we do does not come from human imagination. Everything we do in our Lord’s Day service is commanded in the Scripture – the reading, preaching, singing, giving – for everything has an expressed commandment. God is clear. We are to worship in spirit and in truth and we are only to do that which He has commanded, but here is what is equally true. We must not omit in our worship what God has commanded.

Therefore my takeaway is simply this; let the Amen sound from His people again, gladly for aye we adore Him. This comes from the hymn *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.* I pray the Amen would not be absent in the assembly of the people. So why has this come to my heart? One reason is from Revelation 22. This is easy because of how the Bible ends. Here are the last

two verses in the Bible. Revelation 22:20–21 says [20] *He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen.* [Then a prayer] *Come, Lord Jesus!* [21] *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.* That is Jesus, true forever, be with all of His people.

We have been through the Apostles’ Creed and it starts off with *credo*, I believe and it goes as follows;

***I believe in God the Father Almighty,***  
*maker of heaven and earth; (Amen.)*

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (Amen.)***

*who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, (Amen.)*

*born of the Virgin Mary, (Amen.)*

*suffered under Pontius Pilate, (Amen.)*

*was crucified, died, (Amen.) and was buried; (Amen.)*

*He descended into hades. (Amen.)*

*On the third day he rose again; (Amen.)*

*He ascended into heaven, (Amen.)*

*is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty, (Amen.)*

*and will come again to judge the living and the dead. (Amen.)*

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, (Amen.)***

*the holy catholic church, (Amen.)*

*the communion of saints, (Amen.)*

*the forgiveness of sins, (Amen.)*

*the resurrection of the body (Amen.)*

*and the life everlasting. Amen.*

I believe the Holy Spirit will inevitably, infallibly and relentlessly gather all the elect up to God to the great assembly triumphant in heaven – the church of the Lord Jesus, blood bought and Spirit brought, Amen. I believe in the communion of the saints as they are on mission, on message and in ministry, Amen. I believe all those things and I will use the term that God has given me and God calls me to use with all of His people to affirm Amen.

You might be thinking, ‘Aren’t you concerned that people will just do it by rout and ritual?’ Sure I’m concerned about that but the problem when we have liturgical ‘Amens’ for everyone to unite before God – affirm, acclaim, agree the truth of God’s Word forever – if it’s become ritual the problem is not with the Word but the problem is with our heart. We haven’t solved that by removing the word. You solve that by dealing with your heart. Am I concerned that people may do it so much that it draws attention to themselves? Certainly, but we have something for that and it’s called church discipline, the fellowship of the saints, speaking the truth in love to one another.

Am I concerned that people who come to our service who don’t yet know Jesus, if we keep saying ‘Amen’ it would be embarrassing? Sure, for I remember when I was 14 years old and I brought some of my friends that I played ball with to church. I knew I was in a church that said ‘Amen’ but they never did it until one particular person gave the first one and when he did it then everyone else started. I knew I would be embarrassed but honestly I’d give anything to hear that one particular man say ‘Amen’ one more time. The problem wasn’t his Amen, the problem was my heart and that’s why I was embarrassed.

The same God who knows your heart can read the thoughts and intentions of your heart and that same God has commanded you to give vent to your heart verbally with the Amen, not because He doesn’t know what is in your heart but because you need to speak from the heart. He

has given you what to say – His Son’s Name, Amen. He has commanded you and allows you to use the Name of His Son to reveal your heart in worship, in the adoration of God, in the affirmation of His Word and when it is read, preached and it does help when it’s preached. There have been times in my preaching ministry that I have felt I wasn’t in an assembly but in a mausoleum. I’m not even sure those in the audience are breathing. That is why I enjoy being invited to my fellow African Americans who know how to preach the preacher. Although if you’re not doing too well in certain moments you don’t get an Amen but a ‘Lord, help him.’ But it’s dialogue – God speaks to us and we speak back to God, Amen and to one another to encourage one another as worshippers before the Lord and as a witness to a watching world.

God commands it, calls for it and He has given His Name so that we can give vent to our heart and let the Amen sound from His people again, because gladly for aye – yes – we adore Him forever – Amen. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for our time together in Your Word. Would You minister to the hearts of each one reading this? Jesus has promised to save any and all who put their trust in Him. This day I would love for you to know the guarantee of your salvation, promised in His Word and sealed by His Holy Spirit so will you come to Jesus? If you want to pray with someone please call us at (205) 776-5200 for we are available. Father, would You let Your people who have the Holy Spirit as Your guarantee, Your signature, Your notary sign and seal, in worship and in response to Your Word read, preached, prayed and sung to put their notary signature upon it – Amen, so be it forever – for I ask this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

“Amen”

What?

Why?

When?

Life Takeaway

*Let the Amen sound from His people again! Gladly, for aye we Adore Him!*