

# Rev. 22:21. the Last Amen

by Horatius Bonar

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*The word 'Amen' should be used with understanding, faith, and confidence, as a declaration of our trust in God's promises and power.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:89, Isaiah 55:11, John 14:6, Romans 15:13, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Philipians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Hebrews 11:1, 1 Peter 1:8-9, Revelation 22:21

**Topics:** "The Power of Prayer", "Faith and Assurance"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the profound significance of the word 'Amen' in prayer, illustrating its meanings from ignorance to faith. He explains that 'Amen' should be a declaration of truth, certainty, and faithfulness, reflecting our confidence in God's promises. Bonar categorizes the different ways 'Amen' can be uttered, urging believers to move from mechanical or indifferent responses to heartfelt affirmations of faith and hope. He encourages the congregation to let their 'Amens' resonate with joy and expectation, recognizing the power and love of God in their prayers. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a transformation in how we conclude our prayers, making 'Amen' a true expression of our faith and trust in God.

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## Transcript

"Amen!"--Revelation 22:21.

Amen is a Hebrew word, signifying truth and certainty in the first place; and then our affirmation of something as a certainty, or our desire that it should be so.

It comes also to signify faithfulness and steadfastness in a person, so that that person is himself regarded as truth personified--the truth, the Amen. Hence it is that Christ takes to Himself the designation of the Truth, and the Amen--the faithful and true Witness. Hence it is that He so often (eighty times at least) uses the word 'amen' or 'truly' in His discourses. As the True One and the Truth, He is the Amen. As the confirmer and fulfiller of all the promises of God; as the channel through which they flow down to us--He is the Amen--the truth.

Further, it has come to signify faith and confidence--specially faith and confidence in God. It is the word used in reference to Abraham, 'He believed God,' and to Israel, 'They believed the Lord.'

But it is with the common use of it that we have now to do--that use of it which we make daily when we conclude even our shortest prayer. Amen; that is, so let it be; let it be according to our request, and

according to Your promise. Used in this way, it means much. It is the summary or recapitulation of the whole previous prayer; and therefore it should be uttered in no light or heedless spirit, but with profound reverence and fervor; for it is 'in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard that we say Amen.'

There are, however, different ways of using it; different feelings with which it is uttered--and it is to these that we would now attend.

I. There is the Amen of IGNORANCE. Simple and common as the word is, thousands use it without knowing what it means, or what they themselves intend. We might say that not one out of a hundred uses it intelligently. It is the approved way of finishing off a prayer; it is the word which intimates that the prayer is concluded--that is all; and were it to be introduced at the beginning or middle, as well it might be, men would wonder. It is to them a word, no more; a concluding word or sound, where the voice ceases, and after which the eyes are opened, and the hands unclasped! This is the Amen of ignorance. Are your Amens of this kind? or are they uttered with the understanding--the full realization of the large and solemn meaning which they contain?

II. The Amen of HABIT. All are not ignorant of its significance. Ask many what they intend by affixing it to their prayers, and at once they will tell you. Yet mark them, and you will find the word slipping from their tongue without any corresponding thought as to its sense. They have uttered it quite unconsciously thousands of times. They would not terminate a prayer without it; yet it has become a mere word of habit, into which, when used, no feeling, no earnestness is thrown; a commonplace, random expression, with nothing of soul attached to it, like a well without water; a mechanical utterance, into which they have been educated, and without which they would think the prayer incomplete, but which means no more to them than the oscillations of a pendulum, and which has no more connection with genuine prayer than have the garments in which they are dressed, or the floor on which they kneel.

Are your Amens those of habit--pieces of ornament--the useless appendages of useless devotion--or is your soul thrown into them? Are they the essence of your previous petitions--the concentration and summing up of all your desires? Do you say Amen simply because you are done? or, like David, do you say 'Amen and Amen; the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended;' that is, summed up in this? How many Amens of habit have you uttered? Amens of indifference, that are not better than mockeries? No, and do not some of us, whose petitions are fervent throughout, make void all their earnestness by the lifeless, mechanical, heartless Amen with which we sum them up? Is not our Amen sometimes the dead fly that spoils the precious spikenard of the apothecary?

III. The Amen of UNBELIEF. It seems strange that a word like this should ever be uttered in unbelief; yet such is the case. No, sometimes it would seem as if the most unbelieving part of our prayer part of our prayer is that which should be the most believing--the Amen. We may well wonder how it should be so. It seems almost incredible that a word like this, meant to be associated with faithfulness, and truth, and certainty, should be connected with unbelief, more--should be the utterance of unbelief--the frequent, the daily utterance of unbelief; yet so it is. Our unbelieving Amens are about the most melancholy parts of our prayers--the worst indications of distrust in God. It is vain to speak of wandering thoughts, or to excuse our selves for such thoughts, by the number of the petitions. For here we have but one word, and in that one word our whole prayer is recapitulated and summed up; so that, if unbelief or vain thoughts had pervaded the previous parts, they might have been made up for, as one may say.

Yet that single word is the vainest of the vain words spoken; that word, in which faith seeks to infuse itself twice over into our prayer, is the word from which it is specially excluded. Oh what a reproach to us are our unbelieving Amens! What a mockery of God, and of His promises! The sin of these would be of itself sufficient to shut out our supplications. Yet how little we think of this! With what ease and carelessness do we pronounce that word of unbelief, which should have been the great and special word of faith!

IV. The Amen of FAITH. This is the true Amen; the Amen of souls who have heard the gracious words of Him who cannot lie, and who act upon these. Amen is the proper and natural voice of faith. Whether it is we who are speaking to God, or God who is speaking to us, we say Amen. In the one case it is the expression of faith, in the other the response of faith.

But why should Amen be thus linked with faith? Because that which calls it forth is not simply a desirable thing, but a truth and a certainty. Amen is not the mere utterance of desire--earnest desire--but of believing desire. Let us see how this is. It has to do with such things as the following--

(1.) The free LOVE of God. It is God's testimony regarding His own free love that we listen to in the gospel; and our first belief of that gospel is our saying Amen to His declarations regarding that free love. And as we begin, so are we to go on. Each Amen goes back to this free love, to the beginning of our confidence, and is a renewal of that confidence. In every prayer we keep our eye on this; for without the recognition of this grace, this abundant grace, what would prayer be? Let all our Amens then do justice to the free love of God.

(2.) The TRUTHFULNESS of God. The faithful saying was that to which we first said Amen; for we had made the discovery that it was the true utterance of Him who cannot lie. We were satisfied that He could not speak an untrue word, nor promulgate a statement of fitted to mislead, nor hold out to us a promise which He did not mean to fulfill. Being thus persuaded of the divine truthfulness, we 'believed the report;' we said Amen to each gracious declaration, satisfied of its absolute truth and certainty. So did we at the first; so do we to the last. God is true--truthful, faithful; we will not make Him a liar in any one thing, in any of our communications with Him--least of all in our prayers. Let all our Amens do justice to the truthfulness of God.

(3.) The POWER of God. What He has promised He is able also to perform. He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly, above all we ask. Our prayers rest themselves as much upon His power as His grace and truth. On this we rested when we first came to Him as 'able to save unto the uttermost;' on this we rest still. Every prayer is a recognition of power, and of divine willingness to put forth that power in the behalf of all who will apply for it. It is infinite power--omnipotence. Let each Amen of ours do justice to the power of God.

In addition to these things, to which the faith of our Amens attaches itself, we would only further say that it specially leans upon the cross of Christ in connection with these three. It is round that cross that this faith flings its arms; it is here that it sits down in quiet satisfaction. It sees the grace, the truth, the power of God flowing to us through the blood of Golgotha; and it says Amen to all that God has testified concerning that blood; to the 'it is finished' of the Son of God upon the tree.

It is thus that the believing Amen of our prayers springs out of that which we know of God and His crucified Son. Knowing all this, shall our Amens be those of uncertainty or doubt? Shall they not be the Amens of faith? Shall we ever go to God mocking Him with distrustful Amen? Rather let each Amen be the utterance of triumphant faith; so that even though unbelief may have mingled with our previous petitions, we at the

close dismiss all that unbelief, and, looking back upon each petition, quicken them into happy life by the believing Amen with which we conclude the whole.

V. The Amen of HOPE. God has written much to us concerning our hopes. He has filled our future with 'things hoped for;' and He has bidden us desire them, wait for them, pray for them. There is the hope of the kingdom, of the inheritance, of the glory; above all, there is 'the blessed hope' of the Lord's appearing. These hopes occupy large space in our expectations and prayers. They are still futurities; but they are certainties--bright and blessed beyond what eye has seen or ear heard. In our pleadings regarding these, we use the Amen of hope; realizing it as a hope that makes not ashamed. We say, 'Hallowed by Your name,' and we add the Amen of hope; 'Your kingdom come,' and we add the Amen of hope; 'Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,' and we add the Amen of hope. We hear the Lord's own voice from heaven saying, 'Surely I come quickly,' and we add with the apostle--Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen!

Are our Amens bright and big with hope? As we utter them on our knees before God, do thoughts of the glory fill us? Does that glory stand out before our eye as a certainty--a divinely revealed and divinely promised certainty--a certainty quite as great as that which rests over the past? Each time we utter the Amen in connection with these blessed futurities, does our hope kindle up anew--the hope calling up the Amen, and the Amen making the hope to shine out with fresh brightness? In anticipating such a future, how can we utter a cold, heartless, passive or despairing Amen? Let all our Amens be those of exulting hope!

VI. The Amen of JOY. There is joy set before us, even as before our Master; it is joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is joy springing both from the past and the future. It is the joy of conscious pardon; the joy of friendship with God; the joy of adoption and heirship; the joy of our whole new created being; the joy because of the blessedness in prospect. Past, present, and future--all furnish us with materials for joy. And in our thanksgivings for the past, we breathe out an Amen of joy; in our consciousness of present peace and heavenly favor, we repeat our Amen of joy; in our pleadings for larger blessing to ourselves and to our world, we say Amen with gladness; and in our pressing forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling, looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God, we say Amen and Amen with ever-deepening joy of heart.

How gladly should that word 'Amen!' come forth from our lips! Should it ever have a sorrowful sound? It seems so full of comfort and exultation, that one wonders how we can ever utter it with a sorrowful heart. There is no shade upon the objects in regard to which we utter the Amen; should it not then be a word of joy at all times? Are our Amens such? Do they speak of joy? Do they arise out of joy? Do they cherish and augment the joy? Is the word sweet to us because of the joy which it contains and utters? Many a poor, gloomy Amen have we spoken, belying our profession, and misusing the word. Let us be done with these. Let our Amens be songs--songs gushing up from the fullness of happy souls!

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