

The Dying Art of AMEN!

2 Corinthians 1:13-22 (KJV) [13] For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; [14] As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. [15] And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; [16] And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. [17] When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? [18] But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. [19] For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. [20] **For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.** [21] Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; [22] Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

2 Corinthians 1:13-22 (MSG) [13] Don't try to read between the lines or look for hidden meanings in this letter. We're writing plain, unembellished truth, hoping that [14] you'll now see the whole picture as well as you've seen some of the details. We want you to be as proud of us as we are of you when we stand together before our Master Jesus. [15] Confident of your welcome, I had originally planned two great visits with you — [16] coming by on my way to Macedonia province, and then again on my return trip. Then we could have had a bon-voyage party as you sent me off to Judea. That was the plan. [17] Are you now going to accuse me of being flip with my promises because it didn't work out? Do you think I talk out of both sides of my mouth—a glib yes one moment, a glib no the next? [18] Well, you're wrong. I try to be as true to my word as God is to his. Our word to you wasn't a careless yes canceled by an indifferent no. How could it be? [19] When Silas and Timothy and I proclaimed the Son of God among you, did you pick up on any yes-and-no, on-again, off-again waffling? Wasn't it a clean, strong Yes? [20] **Whatever God has promised gets stamped with the Yes of Jesus. In him,** this is what we preach and pray, the great Amen, God's Yes and our Yes together, gloriously evident. [21] God affirms us, making us a sure thing in Christ, putting his Yes within us. [22] By his Spirit he has stamped us with his eternal pledge—a sure beginning of what he is destined to complete.

2 Corinthians 1:19 (TEV) For Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was preached among you by Silas, Timothy, and myself, is not one who is "Yes" and "No." On the contrary, **he is God's "Yes";**

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 English and many other languages. It is practically a universal word, and has been called the best-known word in human speech.

The word "amen" is directly related – in fact, almost identical – to the Hebrew word for "believe" (aman), or "faithful." Thus, it came to mean "firm," "sure" or "truly," an expression of absolute trust and confidence.

When one believes God, he indicates his faith by an "amen." When God makes a promise, the believer's response is "amen"--"so it will be!" When we pray according to His Word and His will, we know God will answer, so we close with an "amen." But "amen" is not just an idle word – rather, it is the response of a LIFE to God.

In the New Testament, the word "amen" is often translated "verily" or "truly" – in fact, that's the way Jesus most often used it ...

Matthew 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for **verily** I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Matthew 18:3 And said, **Verily** I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:18 **Verily** I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 24:34 **Verily** I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Verily, verily**, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, **Verily, verily**, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 8:58 Jesus said unto them, **Verily, verily**, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

John 14:12 **Verily, verily**, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

“AMEN!” as a response in church services has been around as long as the church itself. It came directly from Old Testament Jewish worship, as is evident where Scripture records the reading of the Law: “and all the people shall say, Amen.” Several of the early church fathers refer to this custom, and Jerome says that at the conclusion of public prayer the united voice of the people sounded like the fall of water or the noise of thunder.

Sadly, this kind of “AMEN!” response in modern church services seems to be a dying art. And the reason that worship is dying is that the churches themselves are dying!

Live churches have space problems (parking, classrooms, etc.);
dead churches have no worries about space.

Live churches are always changing things;
dead churches don't like change, they always stay the same.

Live churches have noisy children and young people;
dead churches are fairly quiet and serene.

Live churches have a shortage of staff;
dead churches usually have a surplus.

Live churches are always overspending their budgets;
dead churches maintain large bank accounts.

Live churches struggle to remember new names;
dead churches – well, everybody knows everybody – for years!

Live churches have a problem developing new leaders;
dead ones just use the same people over and over.

Live churches spend much on missions;
dead churches keep it all at home.

Live churches are filled with tithers;
dead churches are filled with tippers.

Live churches operate primarily on faith;
dead churches operate totally on sight.

Live churches strain to learn and serve;
dead churches seek rest and comfort.

Live churches evangelize;
dead churches fossilize!

Live churches are energized and enthused by worship;
dead churches are embarrassed and exhausted by worship.
But look at what happened in the Scripture ...

Nehemiah 8:6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Psalms 41:13 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

Psalms 72:19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

Psalms 89:52 Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

Psalm 106:48 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Luke 24:53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Romans 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Revelation 7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

AMEN! agrees with God, agrees with the preacher, agrees with the sermon, agrees with the music, agrees with the Spirit, and says YES!

AMEN! is similar in concept to the word HALLELUJAH! We've made them both just insignificant sayings and we say them without much thought, but they are powerful words! Hallelujah is not on par with saying "yippee!" or "thank goodness!" In the Hebrew language, HALLELU is in the imperative mode; it is a COMMAND meaning PRAISE! (It's similar to what you do when you tell your dog to SIT!) And YAH is shorthand for YAHWEH, so HALLELUJAH is not a request, but a COMMAND to praise the Lord!
AMEN! YES! HALLELUJAH! PRAISE THE LORD!

This word is so powerful that it is even a title of Jesus Christ Himself:

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

That's what Paul was talking about!

2 Corinthians 1:20 (KJV) For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen

2 Corinthians 1:20 (MSG) Whatever God has promised gets stamped with the Yes of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 1:19 (TEV) he is God's "Yes";

God's Word is always faithful and true, because He is none other than the Creator of all things – He is our eternal AMEN! In this passage, Paul uses as strong an affirmation of truth as can be expressed in the Greek language.

The entire Bible even closes with an "AMEN" in Revelation 22:21, assuring everyone who reads it that the whole Book is absolutely true and trustworthy. AMEN!

JESUS IS GOD'S DIVINE YES!

Of all the words in the English language there are few more beautiful than the word "yes." Children at play ask, "Will you catch me?" But adults also ask that of God, of you, of me and of others. "Will you be there for me?" "Will you help me?" "Will you forgive me?" "Will you give me another chance?" How beautiful when the answer to those questions is "Yes!"

Illustration: Marriage proposals via billboards, scoreboards, highway signs, skywriting, etc. Wouldn't it be embarrassing if the answer was an equally prominent "No!" ???

And yet many people, either because of negative life experiences or plain ignorance, see God and life as one big "No!" It's as if God is leaning over the

balcony of heaven saying 'No, stop it, you can't do that. You shouldn't do that.' That's the way some people see God – and that's the way some people see us, His church. But that's not the message of the Bible! Christianity is not one big "No!" because JESUS IS GOD'S DIVINE YES!

COLUMBINE ILLUSTRATION: When Dylan Clebold and Eric Harris did that awful thing, people were speculating before the details came out why they were motivated to be so evil. Some people said that they were insane, other said that they were trying to act out some sort of fantasy. Later on, their diaries revealed something quite different. They wrote in their diaries that they knew that they were doing something wrong. They knew exactly that what they were doing was going to bring shame to their family. But in their diaries they wrote that they were tired of life at age 18, that there was nothing worth living for. That's a sad commentary in a world where God has entered in and said, "Yes" (not "No") through Jesus Christ.

C. S. Lewis coined a phrase called **The Divine Humility**. What if somebody entered into a relationship with you and said, "Look, I would like to be your friend unless something or someone better comes up." or "I would love to enter into an intimate relationship with you, maybe we can even get married down the road unless I meet somebody else." Now most of us would say, "Take a hike," right? How many of our testimonies are "I tried this, I tried that, I tried the other thing and finally when I got into my desperate moment I called on God." That's the divine humility – that God waits for us and doesn't mind being the last resort. That's who Jesus is, the humble and lowly one who came into this world to touch us where we hurt. And then the Bible says that all of the promises of God are "Yes" in Him. Think about that. People say, "Now let me think, do you mean that when God says to Joshua, 'I'll be with you wherever you go' that is 'Yes' to me in Jesus?" Yes. "Do you mean when God says to Jeremiah, 'I know the plans I have for you, plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and hope.' That's a promise to me directly?" Yes! Jesus is the sum total of all God's promises!

The only time God ever says "NO" is when it is in the context of a greater good (even if that good is unseen at present). If our children come and ask mom one thing and then they say to dad, "Mommy won't let me play with the steak knives." That's a "No" that counts greater than a "Yes." Because God is always for us, to protect us and to provide for us.

LIGHT BULB ILLUSTRATION: This light bulb is useless – until it is connected to the power source. You know, people today are cynical and negative. They don't believe in God. That's living life by a "NO." If you live life by a NO, you will turn into a NO. Apart from his power, your purpose can't happen. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly."

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE GOD'S YES? THEN SAY "AMEN!" WITH YOUR LIFE!
AND LET'S SAY "AMEN!" WITH OUR CHURCH!
Hebrew word "AMAN" (same root word) ...

Genesis 15:6 And he **believed (AMEN!)** in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the **faithful (AMEN!)** God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

Isaiah 53:1 Who hath **believed (AMEN!)** our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

ILLUSTRATION: Mentally challenged children in a Christian special education class that were told about the coming of the Lord ...

Fingertips and Noses

(Words and Music by Eddie Carswell & Oliver Wells)

*Up in the hills somewhere in Kentucky
In a little old school way back in the nothing
Where special kids born with special needs
Are sent to learn life's ABCs*

*Their teacher, Mrs. Jones, tells them all about Jesus
How in the twinkling of an eye He's coming back to get us
About streets of gold and pearly gates*

*How they want to go, they just can't wait
And she can't keep them in their seats
They're all at the windows straining to see*

*And it's
Fingertips and noses pressed to the windowpanes
Longing eyes, expectant hearts for Him to come again
All they know is that they love Him so
And if He said He'd come, He's coming
And they can't keep their windows clean
For fingertips and noses*

*She tried to explain to the kids about His coming
She tried to calm them down, but they just wouldn't listen
They just giggled and they clapped their hands
They're so excited that He's coming for them
And the first thing you know they're out of their seats
Back at the windows straining to see*

*Where will Jesus find us when He comes again?
Will we be like little children waiting just for Him?*

*With our
Fingertips and noses pressed to the windowpanes
Longing eyes, expectant hearts for Him to come again
All we know is that we love Him so
And if He said He'd come, He's coming
And we can't keep our windows clean
For our fingertips and noses.*