

GOD'S CALL FOR A RECOUNT

Psalm 9: 1-20 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

The Florida election recount in the year 2000 was a period of vote re-counting that occurred following the unclear results of the year 2000 United States presidential election between George W. Bush and Al Gore, specifically the Florida results. The election was ultimately settled in favor of George W. Bush when the U.S. Supreme Court, with its final ruling on *Bush v. Gore*, stopped a recount that had been proposed by the Florida Supreme Court, which had the effect of awarding Bush a majority of votes in the Electoral College. Recounts are a little bit like a challenge by a football coach of a ruling on a play that he disagrees with. It could cost an NFL team a win or it could help them win. A challenged call by the coach makes the umpires in essence do a recount, to re-study the instant replay in question. Sometimes, a call that is very bad is declared to be an unchallengeable call, so it cannot be reviewed. This very year, 2012, has become a strange political year with wins and losses being incredibly close. The vote in Ohio was very close, but they did not do a recount. The closest vote to date I know of, came in Iowa after the former Massachusetts governor, Mitt Romney appeared to eke out a slim 8-point win at the Iowa caucus on January 3, 2012. After a long night of vote counting and nail-biting, Romney appeared to post the slimmest-ever margin of victory in Iowa. Then on January 19, 2012, the Des Moines Register reported that the final count of the vote, now from a recount, put former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum ahead by 34 votes, which meant the recount changed the outcome by 42 votes in Santorum's favor. Iowa GOP officials discovered inaccuracies in 131 precincts which affected the final vote. The certified number finally showed a win for Rick Santorum, who won 29,839 votes to Romney's 29,805 votes. Whenever there is a recount, it is always because the conclusions are close, but inconclusive. However, today we come to a strange kind of recounting.

In Psalm 9, verse 1, I read about a recount God inspired David to do. This Hebrew word translated "recount" in Psalm (: 1, 14, is the word **caphar**, pronounced sawfar. I noticed in the New American Standard, this word is translated tell and in the King James Version, caphar is translated show forth. In this psalm of David, I read in verse 1, "I will recount all of your wonderful deeds... and in verse 14, "that I may recount all your praises." Does this recounting mean to tabulate or tally up? ***I researched caphar and that is precisely the meaning.*** The English Standard Version hit the nail on the head. Caphar means to score with a mark as a tally or a record, to inscribe, to enumerate, to recount, to number, and to account. This word occurs 161 times in the Old Testament. One of the first times it is used is found in Genesis 15: 1-5. Here I read, "After these things the word of the Lord came to

Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will You give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.” And Abram said, “Behold, You have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir, your very own son shall be your heir.” And God brought Abram outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and caphar—number the stars, recount the stars, if you are able to caphar or recount them.” Then God said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And Abram believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness. This other enumerating word counted it for righteousness is a different Hebrew word, **chashab**. This word means to compute and to count mentally. Some of you chashab when you grocery shop. You know within pennies what the final tally for your groceries will be. You get very close.

Yet, did you know that any count we make regarding God always falls short of accuracy and short of His glory. That’s why God asks today for us to recount, if we can tally up His amazing ways. He knows, unlike the Iowa recount, that all our counts are way low. God longs for us to count and then recount His amazing deeds daily for the rest of our lives. This same word caphar is used by an unknown psalmist in Psalm 71: 15 where we read, “My mouth will tell – caphar—recount of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.” Also, Asaph is the psalmist in Psalm 79: 13, where we read, “But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation, we will caphar—recount your praise.” In 1897, Johnson Oatman, Jr. wrote a very beloved hymn entitled “Count Your Blessings.” It is on page 430 of our hymnal. Verse 3 and the chorus is powerful. “When you look at others with their lands and gold, Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold; Count your many blessings—money cannot buy, Your reward in heaven nor your home on high. Count your blessings—name them one by one; Count your blessings—see what God hath done; Count your blessings—name them one by one; Count your many blessings—see what God hath done.”

Today, I want to join the psalmist David in Psalm 9, another unknown psalmist in psalm 71 and the psalmist Asaph in Psalm 79, along with Johnson Oatman, Jr. as I call all of you, along with the Lord, for a recount. I don’t believe any of us are even close to fully numbering all our blessings, for they number more than the stars of the heavens. To help us recount God’s amazing blessings, I find in this psalm five categories of God’s amazing deeds. I want us all to learn to pray these five categories back to the Lord. Each of these five categories we can turn into prayer or praise to the Lord. What are these five categories of prayer to help us recount?

LORD, YOU MAKE OUR ENEMIES STUMBLE, TURN BACK AND PERISH. (I.)

Notice verses 1-6. Notice that that title of the psalm is “To the choir master: According to Muthlabben. A Psalm of David.” The Jewish Targum translates this with a paraphrase—“To be sung over the man that went out between the camps, that is, Goliath of Gath—upon the occasion of his death. There is no certainty—but there is praise in this psalm as well as prayer. Muth means death and labben means son. Some say the psalm was written after the death of Absalom, who had plotted to overthrow and kill his father David. Some say the muth means alamothe—meaning the psalm is to be sung by female voices. No one knows for certain, but the first category is clear—it is both a praise and a prayer. Let’s do a recount in our lives saying—“Lord, you make our enemies stumble, turn back and perish.” Now let’s follow the thought of David—He begins with a fourfold—“I will!” –v. 1,2. Verse three is the category given clearly. Then in verses 4-6, there is a five-fold “You have.” Notice **(1) You have maintained my just cause.** It is as if David was on trial, and without hope until God spoke on his behalf and spoke a favorable verdict. The picture I see is God meeting the enemy and blinding them with His glory. Then v. 6—after they stumbled and perish, they come to everlasting ruins, their cities are rooted out, and their very memory perishes. **(2) You have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.** The place of judgment is the throne. And from God’s throne, He knows our cause, He considers the matter and He intervenes in our behalf. You have rebuked the nation. **(3) You have rebuked the nations.** The rebuke spoken of here is the vanquishing of David’s enemies. He is recounting it. **(4) You have made the wicked perish.** If this Muthlabben refers to Goliath or Absalom, they were enemies, and fierce enemies, but now they were dead and gone. **(5) You have blotted out their name forever and ever.** Recounting the scene, the Canaanites passed off the stage of history and are in ruins forever. They are a nation that has never revived.

Have you done a recount of all your enemies God has judged? Do a recount. Maybe you don’t yet see God judging your enemies. A few years ago, an agnostic farmer wrote to the editor of his local newspaper, who was a Christian. He wrote; “In defiance of your God I plowed my fields this year on Sunday, I disked and fertilized them on Sunday, I planted them on a Sunday, I cultivated them on Sunday, and I reaped them on Sunday. This October I had the biggest crop I have ever had. How do you explain that?” The editor replied: “God does not always settle his accounts in October.” Beloved, it is a praise and a prayer—“Lord, You make our enemies stumble, turn back and perish. Secondly,

LORD, YOU JUDGE THE WORLD WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS. (II.) Notice verses 7-8, 11, 12a, 15-17, 19, 20. We sing the song, “Our God reigns.” Recount

all the times when you have realized God reigns. Since Israel became a nation, many times Israel has been impossibly surrounded and ready to be defeated, but testimonies of God's intervention abound of how He judged the nations that sought to destroy her. Iran is ready to destroy Israel. I fear for Iran, for they are touching the apple of God's eye. There is no end to the eyewitness miracles of God during the 6 Day War. Documents from the battles include: (1) The Egyptian tank commander in the Sinai Desert who surrendered to a vastly inferior Israeli force on the second day of the war, because a desert mirage made him see hundreds of Israeli tanks where there were no more than a dozen; (2) Then there was the Jordanian forces who welcomed Israeli tanks under the command of Colonel Uri Ram into Shechem on the third day of the war, because faulty communications misled the Arabs into thinking that these were Iraqi tanks that had come to reinforce them; (3) Then there was the battle for Ammunition Hill on the northern outskirts of Jerusalem, which was captured by one Israeli scout by mistake when he fell into a Jordanian trench in the moonless night at 2:00 o'clock on Tuesday morning. He started shooting from the hip and God brought the fall of Ammunition Hill was the prelude to the capture of the Old City 30 hours later. The Word is true, "If God be for us, who can stand against us?" (Romans 8: 31)

Beloved, when I consider David's words in verse 17, I shudder for America. "The wicked shall return to Hell, Sheol, all the nations that forget God." Don't quit living for Jesus. Even as God promised Abraham he would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if there were ten godly there, so I pray God will hold off ever seeing America fully as a nation that forgets God. May we recount His judgment nevertheless and keep warning our nation as Noah warned the world before the flood. God keep us recounting and preaching and praying and hammering for the glory of the Lord even in our sinful and adulterous generation. 3rdly,

LORD, YOU ARE A STRONGHOLD FOR THE OPPRESSED AND THOSE WHO KNOW AND TRUST YOUR NAME. (III.) Do a recount, beloved. Notice verses 9, 10a. Did you know that the presence of the Lord that is our refuge and brings peace to His people at the same moment brings panic to the enemy? They flee and perish. The Hebrew word for the oppressed is **dakak**. It means those broken small, the crushed, the broken, the dejected, the afflicted, the unhappy, and the oppressed. This includes victims who have been wronged, the downtrodden, and the subjects of tyranny and injustice. In the case of the broken, we have nowhere else to go but to the Lord. We have nowhere else to look but to the Lord. Think of all the times, recount them when you have run to God for your refuge and He has been there for you. He knows His own and we know Him and His voice. We know His name, verse 10. We are more than acquainted with Jesus. He is our

Bridegroom. God's name is a synonym for His nature. His name is faithful, true, holy, changeless, loving, merciful, just, and all of God's character are many of His names. The more intimately we know the Lord, the more entirely we trust Him. The more we know Him, the more we love Him. What is a stronghold? Let me give you the answer of a Navy SEAL. Seven years ago, on June 28, 2005., four Navy SEAL commandos were on a mission in Afghanistan, searching for a notorious al-Qaeda terrorist leader hiding in a Taliban stronghold. As the battle ensued, three of the SEALs were killed, and the fourth, Marcus Luttrell was blasted unconscious by a rocket grenade and blown over a cliff. Severely injured, he spent the next four days fighting off six al Qaeda assassins who were sent to finish him, and then he crawled for seven miles through the mountains before he was taken in by a Pashtun tribe, who risked everything to protect him from the encircling Taliban killers. They took Luttrell back to their village, where the law of hospitality, considered "strictly non-negotiable," took hold. "They were committed to defend him against the Taliban," Luttrell wrote, "until there was no one left alive." Beloved, when we run to Jesus, He is pledged to protect us forever. We belong to Him and His promise to be our stronghold is the strongest promise ever. The Pashtun tribe have a great hospitality pledge for everyone they take in. Yet no promise is as certain and as sure as God's and He cannot be defeated. 4thly,

LORD, YOU NEVER FORSAKE THOSE WHO SEEK YOU OR FORGET THOSE WHO CRY TO YOU IN THEIR AFFLICTION. (IV.)

Notice verses 10b, 12b, 13-14. In verse 10b, who is it that God will never forsake? It is those who seek Him. In Hebrew terms, to seek Him is to long for God, to look for His help in trouble—in the extremity of trouble when all hope of deliverance is cut off. To seek is to turn to God with desire and obedience to Him in daily life. To seek Him is to know that nothing is better than to give ourselves to a daily dependence and deeper searching to know God better. David said, "Search me, O God," in Psalm 39 but he is saying here, "I am searching for You, O God." It is a mutual pursuit that God has of us and we have of Him. It is the pursuit of a husband for his wife and a wife for her husband. We all know the popular song, of Barbara Streisand and Neil Diamond, "You Don't Sing Me Love Songs, You Don't Bring Me Flowers Anymore." Beloved, once you belong to Jesus, He never quits pursuing you and with David, we know that we who keep pursuing Him, He will never forsake. We have His New Testament promise on it as well in Hebrews 13: 5b as He declares, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." I love the song we sung this morning that thrills to this truth. It is a wonderful recounting of God's never letting go. "Oh no, You never let go, through the calm and through the storm, oh no, You never let go of me." I want to remind you that that same love of God modeled in our lives from Jesus is our promise in marriage when we promise,

as we become husband and wife, “I take you to be my wedded husband or wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part, according to God’s holy ordinance, I will obey Christ in my relationship to you, and with that commitment, I pledge you my love and my faithfulness.” When I think of all the times God could have rightly let go of me, but He never let go, I shudder. I Timothy 2: 13 declares, “If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. I don’t believe any of us have come close to doing a full recount of God’s faithfulness. Great is Thy Faithfulness. Then I read “You never forget those who cry to You in their affliction.(v. 12b)The Hebrew word for afflicted or humble is **aniy**. It means those who are depressed in mind or circumstances, those who are disabled, those who are distressed, those who are poorly paid for their labor, those who are socially defenseless, those who are oppressed, those who are spiritually oppressed, and those who are alone and desolate. I see God’s attitude to the afflicted, same word, aniy when I read Proverbs 21: 13 which says, “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the aniy, the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.” Recount all the times God has not forsaken or forgotten us. Fifthly,

LORD, YOU GIVE HOPE TO THE NEEDY AND TO THE POOR. (V.)

Notice with me verse 18 which declares, “For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.” This last category of praise and prayer is where I rejoice to recount God’s favor to me. I know what it is to witness God’s giving hope to me when our family has gone through times when we didn’t get a paycheck, because our church many years ago had an exodus of 12 families. I told our church to pay our mortgage. God supplied so often. Let me recount 3 ways. (1) Bev Bradley on the night of a Valentine Party at our church which came just after a severe ice storm (2) Roger and Carol Thorne who attended an Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania -- \$3,000.00 and (3) the Smoke alarm story—of what God can do with \$8.34. God is calling for a recount with you. You and I aren’t even close to fully recounting His great mercies. I close with Psalm 9: 1, 14. Amen.