

A Bigger Gospel and a Bigger World

Brainstorm for a few minutes, making a list in each column.

*Things that are easy for me to believe
God cares about*

*Things I usually don't think about God
being involved in*

Reflect:

- *What's on your lists?*
- *What do these lists tell you about how you see God?*
- *What consequences does this kind of divided thinking lead to for yourself?*
- *How are these lists different from ones you would have made 5 years ago?*

Two Stories, Two Tasks

People sometimes describe the Bible as the story of God's loss and winning back of humankind. From that perspective, you can call it a bit of a love story, a "love-gone-wrong-then-made right" story.

But beginning in Genesis and quietly working all through the Bible, we can see another, subtler story also playing out. In the very first chapter of the Bible, we see God giving us a task, *work*, that is explained in the five verbs of Genesis 1:28 – “**Be fruitful and multiply and fill** the earth and **subdue** it and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” As David Hegeman explains in Plowing in Hope, God has set us on a course that moves from a “splendid garden” to a “glorious city” (p. 32).

Man was given the task to order, develop and embellish God's splendid creation, to realize the multifarious potentialities which were embedded within it. All this was commanded before the fall of man into sin. All of this was an integral part of God's 'very good' creation order (Genesis 1:31). (Hegeman, p. 29)

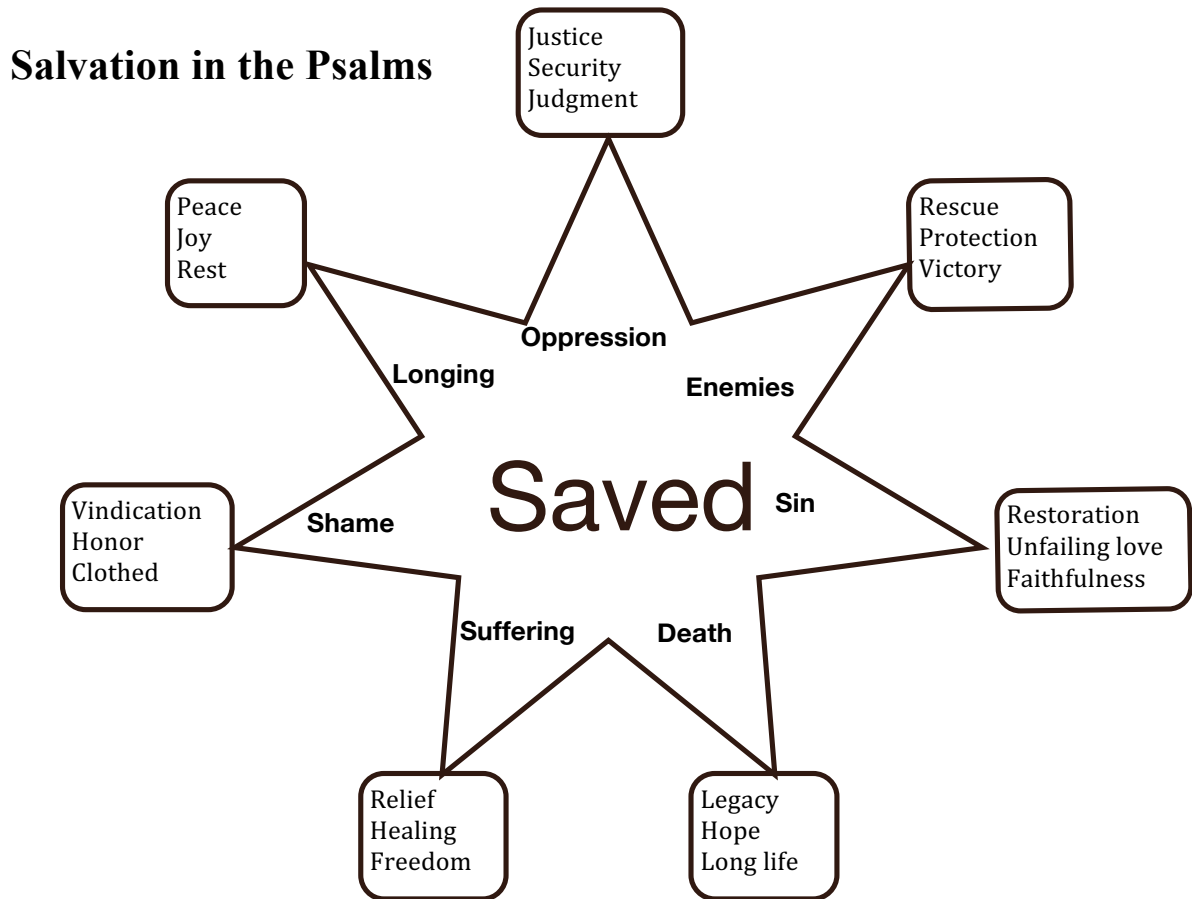
With the advent of sin, this work has become more complicated, *but it has not been superseded*. Because of the fall, God had to take up the work of redemption (what we are calling the Bible's "love-gone-wrong" story) and has asked us to join Him in this work – but not to the exclusion of His earlier call “to shape God's creation in line with His good desires” (Hegeman, p. 43). God clearly desires our redemption and reconciliation, but He also desires – has always desired – our enjoyment and wise stewardship of a world He has invested with many riches. He has called us to join him in building a better world. And though it is subtler, this story is also a love story, a story of caring for others and building something beautiful together.

If this part of the Bible story is true, and if all the verses we know about Jesus' complete dominion over all of life is true, then as my friend Chuck Blakeman says, there really is nothing in life that is “secular” – it is all owned by God and is all for God. Our task on earth, then, has two parts: we are both God's priests, working with Him in various ways in the story of redemption, *and* we are also co-rulers, tasked with helping to move our world closer to His grand design. Just as God invites us into the work of influencing and encouraging others to be reconciled to God, He has also given us the task of crafting and interpreting laws and building gardens and stewarding money for the value that these task have in and of themselves. *Our work is itself valuable* because it fits in with God's desire that we take the resources of the world He has given us and use them wisely to build the world into a glorious place, a place that is good to live in and that reflects – down to every spoon and ink cartridge – His glory!

If you were to accept these ideas, how would it change the way you do your job? Do laundry? Play sports?

A Bigger Salvation

“Salvation” the right word to describe what God does to help us with our guilt and shame. But it is also the right word to use when we think about what God is doing more broadly in our world. Of course, salvation includes Jesus’ death and resurrection as God’s solution for our problem with sin. But throughout the Bible, we can find that God’s work of salvation includes even more. (The picture and chart below were developed by Al Engler.)



Below is an overview of the meaning of salvation taken from the book of Psalms. Skim through it for general impressions.

Psa. 13:5 But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your **salvation**.

Psa. 14:7 Oh, that **salvation** for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!

Hope

David declares his trust that God’s love and care will cause Him to rescue David from his enemies in spite of current circumstances.

Restoration

David’s hoped for salvation in this case is that God would restore the fortunes of His people.

Psa. 18:2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my **salvation**, my stronghold.

Psa. 27:1 ¶ The LORD is my light and my **salvation**— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?

Psa. 28:8 The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of **salvation** for his anointed one.

Psa. 35:3, 9 Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Say to my soul, “I am your **salvation**....” Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in his **salvation**.

Psa. 37:39 The **salvation** of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.

Psa. 40:10 I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and **salvation**. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.

Psa. 50:23 He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the **salvation** of God.”

Psa. 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your **salvation** and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Psa. 53:6 Oh, that **salvation** for Israel would come out of Zion! When God restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!

Psa. 62:1 ¶ My soul finds rest in God alone; my **salvation** comes from him.

Psa. 62:2 He alone is my rock and my **salvation**; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

Psa. 62:6 He alone is my rock and my **salvation**; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

Psa. 62:7 My **salvation** and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

Security

Message: GOD is bedrock under my feet, the castle in which I live, my rescuing knight.

My God—the high crag
where I run for dear life,
hiding behind the boulders,
safe in the granite hideout.

Source of personal courage

The focus of this psalm is on the personal courage and assurance that comes from God’s protective salvation.

Protection

God’s strength protects his people.

Vindication

God actually fighting the enemies of David and vindicating him before men.

Protection, vindication, justice

This Psalm encourages people to trust God for protection, for vindication and ultimately for justice.

Care

In this Psalm salvation includes protection from enemies, but is expanded to include all of God’s loving care for his people.

Judgment

In the context of this Psalm, salvation is the judgment of God on all people. It is a plea for God’s people to trust Him in light of the coming judgment.

Joy

Joy is here a byproduct of salvation, which David asks God to restore as part of his confession and repentance regarding his sin with Bathsheba.

Restoration

Rest

Refuge

Security

Honor

<u>Psa. 69:13</u> But I pray to you, O LORD, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation .	<u>Vindication, Rescue, Redemption</u>
<u>Psa. 69:27</u> Charge them with crime upon crime; do not let them share in your salvation .	<u>A shared blessing among the godly</u>
<u>Psa. 69:29</u> I am in pain and distress; may your salvation , O God, protect me.	<u>Relief from pain & suffering</u>
<u>Psa. 71:15</u> My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure.	<u>Righteousness</u>
<u>Psa. 74:12</u> But you, O God, are my king from of old; you bring salvation upon the earth.	<u>Rule</u>
<u>Psa. 85:7</u> Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation .	<u>Unfailing Love</u>
<u>Psa. 85:9</u> Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.	<u>Peace</u>
<u>Psa. 91:16</u> With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation .”	<u>The context of this Psalm points towards peace.</u> <u>Lifetime of loving, protective care</u>
<u>Psa. 95:1</u> ¶ Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation .	<u>Security</u>
<u>Psa. 98:1</u> ¶ Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.	<u>Greatness</u>
<u>Psa. 98:3</u> He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.	<u>Faithfulness</u>
<u>Psa. 118:14</u> The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation .	<u>Strength & Song</u>
<u>Psa. 118:21</u> I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation .	<u>Answered prayer</u>
<u>Psa. 119:41</u> May your unfailing love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise;	<u>Unfailing Love</u>
<u>Psa. 119:81</u> My soul faints with longing for your salvation , but I have put my hope in your word.	<u>Fulfilled Longing</u>
<u>Psa. 119:123</u> My eyes fail, looking for your salvation , looking for your righteous promise.	<u>Something longed for</u>
<u>Psa. 119:155</u> Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek out your decrees.	<u>Tied to seeking God’s decrees</u>
<u>Psa. 119:166</u> I wait for your salvation , O LORD, and I follow your commands.	<u>To be waited for</u>
<u>Psa. 119:174</u> I long for your salvation , O LORD, and your law is my delight.	<u>To be longed for</u>
<u>Psa. 132:16</u> I will clothe her priests with salvation , and her saints will ever sing for joy.	<u>Contrasted with shame</u>
<u>Psa. 149:4</u> For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation .	<u>Blessing</u>

Summary

How does this picture of salvation compare to the picture you have held in the past? What implications for everyday living come to mind?

As Eugene Peterson (translator of *The Message*) explains...

The root meaning in Hebrew of 'salvation' is to be broad, to become spacious, to enlarge. It carries the sense of deliverance from an existence that has become compressed, confined, and cramped.... Salvation is God's determination to rescue his creation; it is his activity in recovering the world. It is personal and impersonal, it deals with souls and cities, it touches sin and sickness. There is a reckless indiscriminateness about salvation.

How does this picture of "gaining space" and living a larger life fit with your experience with God so far? What might it mean in your future?

If God's "reckless" salvation" includes "souls and cities... sin and sickness," what are some personal implications for you? In thinking about partnering with God, what parts of this salvation are you most interested in working with Him on?