

**Genesis 1**  
The Sweeper  
18<sup>th</sup> August 2019 am Hill and Arcadia

Is there anything to be worried about or anxious about especially in a world where there are **so many resources** and **so much expertise**.

It appears that we have all we need for everything useful **for secure** and confident living?

- There are **political analysts** who confidently predict the rise and fall of leaders and nations.
- There are **climatologists** who have computer programs and satellites scrutinizing, predicting and warning citizens about dangerous weather patterns.
- The stronger nations of the world have **nuclear weapons** strategically placed to keep them safe from foreign invasion or harm.
- **Medical science** continues to develop procedures, equipment and medicines that overcome the nastiest diseases.
- Not to forget we live in **a world of affluence**. We have strong currencies like the Euro, dollar and the pound. Surely if you have enough of this stuff at least most problems can be solved.
- Also we are so fortunate to have ready access to the “information explosion”. **Knowledge** about almost anything is instantly available on the internet.

These categories **only scratch the surface** of all we have and know.

Surely then you and I and the rest of the world **have every reason** to be confident and secure and courageous about our lives into the future. We have so much, we know so much, we can do so much – we can conquer anything!

**And yet** with all of “this” people still feel vulnerable.

Could there be another 9/11? Could SA become like Zimbabwe? Will we have power tomorrow? Could there be another Tsunami or earthquake or flood or hurricane? Will I get cancer or AIDS or TB or Parkinson’s? Will my money be worth anything when I retire? Will I end up divorced or bereaved or killed in a car accident? Will I be raped or murdered by an intruder? What happens when I die?

These, no doubt are **legitimate concerns**. No wonder people are jittery.

Now **if that is true for us** living in the sophisticated enlightened 21<sup>st</sup> century what about the Israelites living thousands of years ago?

There were **fewer experts**; they were surrounded by larger stronger nations; these nations served and sought to appease a multiplicity of fickle gods. The people of Israel’s knowledge must have been fairly limited in terms of how things work or how things could be improved...

**They too** must have felt vulnerable and afraid!

## 1 Why are people so insecure?

**At school** you steer clear of the bully; **at work** a demanding boss or two faced colleague or sometimes even the challenge of the job could threaten your employment; **Illness** threatens your physical well-being; **the economy** threatens your living comfort; **Crime** threatens your life and security; in our world corruption and greed threatens future prosperity

People get scared largely because they feel **threatened**.

And the reason we get scared is because of two factors; one is **power** (strength) and the other is **intention / purpose**. These two issues are connected.

Any **3-year-old** can rant and rave all she wants about having to have a healthy meal replaced with sweets and chocolates, but can do nothing to accomplish this wish. She is powerless to accomplish her intention!

However, if **the Chinese authorities** want to get rid of the instigators of the protests in Hong Kong; to remove the increased demand from the people for democracy – they can do it. They are powerful with a history of a disregard for the sanctity of life.

My point being that you or I have **every reason to be insecure** if we are being threatened by anyone or anything stronger than ourselves with evil intent.

## 2 How can our insecurity be addressed?

### 2.1 By establishing the extent of God's power

That is where the Bible begins. In the **opening phrase** of the Bible the record is set straight about how this wonderful universe came into existence.

*Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

**God made** the entire universe out of nothing. All of it ...in all its indescribable magnitude and magnificence – made by God. And for our benefit the author zooms in to describe something of **the process** of creation of our little planet earth.

*Genesis 1:2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep,*

Here we have a glimpse at a place which is **like a desert** where nothing can live. A place where there is no light at all – pitch black. All that exists at this point is formless, lifeless, empty, dark, deep ocean. Nothing can grow or develop on this earth. It is utter chaos.

But there is a **ray of hope** for ...*V2b the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

The **Spirit of God** is not part of the chaos; he hovers over the chaos like a mighty eagle. He is about to bring order out of this chaos. God begins to speak...

His first word takes on **the lethal darkness** *Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

And so He continues for **the first 3 days**; God forcing back the powers of chaos (darkness and water) in order to form a liveable cosmos.

After limiting the darkness, God speaks and takes on **the destructive waters**.

*Genesis 1:6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." ...and it was so.*

The earth starts to **take shape**; water above and water below and air to breathe, but life as God intended is not possible.

Again God speaks making the earth **fit for habitation** – there is land and vegetation.

*Genesis 1:9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.*

Do you **get the picture** of what is happening here on these first 3 days? God is forcing back the destructive powers of chaos with his powerful word.

This is something that must be **remembered and contemplated**. Don't be tempted to be like certain **scuffers** who no longer want to recognize God

*2 Peter 3:5-7 ...they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.*

The creation account continues with an **interesting observation**. The creation of the sun, moon and stars is placed on the 4<sup>th</sup> day, right between the creation of *vegetation* (3<sup>rd</sup> day) and the creation of *fish and birds* (day 5).

Is God not **saying something to the Israelites** who feared the "powerful pagan gods"? God is simply pointing out that these gods (sun, moon and stars) are as much God's creatures as are vegetation and fish and birds. There is no reason to be afraid of them!

The point is **reinforced** by the author not even mentioning the sun and moon by name. Instead he refers to them as "*lights in the sky*". They are not gods but "lights" placed in the sky by God for God and his purposes.

And in all of this creative activity **God is making known** the extent of his power.

For those **original hearers** this sent a strong message about God.

**He is** the King of the universe and king of this world. In ancient times kings were the owners of the land and the law of the land. The king spoke and it was done.

The picture unfolding is of an **infinitely powerful Sovereign God** who utters a decree from his throne. And in the very utterance the thing is done.

When at any time **you doubt** the magnitude or extent of the power of God – just examine the evidence. The Psalmist got this right

*Psalm 33:6-11 6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. 10 The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. 11 But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

## 2.2 By establishing the nature of God's intentions

As you read this passage you would notice **a recurring pattern**. "Introduction - and God said ...Command - let there be ...Report - and it was so ...Evaluation - and God saw that it was good ... Time sequence - and there was evening and there was morning

There is **some degree of variation** in the use of the formula. But one constant is the divine evaluation that each element of God's creation is good. The object is created just as it should be, with no flaws or blemishes.

On each of these reported days of creation, **God** is the gifted artist who looks back to admire and approve his own work. God is pleased with his handiwork.

There is a **subtle difference** in God's evaluation when he inspects his creation of man and woman. They are seen to be, not just "good" but "very good" (v31).

One is left with a clear impression that humankind is **the climactic moment** of creation, and that God is more than well pleased with humans – made as image bearers of God.

(Ruling or having dominion over God's creation v26, Continue the creative activity by being fruitful and increasing in number v28, unlike the rest of creation, humans have the privilege of relating to God)

In **sharp contrast** with the Babylonian creation story (Enuma Elish), which portrays humans as slaves of the gods, *Genesis 1* proclaims we are created as his representatives in this world. We manage this kingdom on God's behalf. That is God's good plan for his kingdom and for humans

*Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

His **good purposes** are further revealed in his provision of food and care. In pagan belief humans had to provide food for the many gods, here God provides food for the people. A picture of the goodness of God toward His creation.

**By establishing** the indescribable power (ability) of God whose intentions are not malicious but good consider the following application:

### 3 Application

I learned that in the game of **soccer and hockey** there is normally someone who is placed in the position of 'sweeper'.

This was always good news for me because in both my hockey and soccer escapades it was not uncommon for me to miss the ball or make **some kind of blunder** that could put our game at risk.

Our soccer team always had **a sweeper**. His name was Eric Clark. He was older and wiser than all of us and he was a brilliant soccer player.

A hacker like me **felt secure** on the field.

I knew of **the ability** of the sweeper. Eric Clark was rock solid; a seasoned capable and reliable player. He would cover for the mistakes of us weaker players. He was always hovering around to protect our goals preventing the opposition from winning.

He would **strategically feed** the ball to our forwards to provide opportunities for our team to score goals and win

I was glad to learn and get to experience the truth that a sweeper **takes care of** present mistakes and he takes care of future opportunities.

**My point** is that in some small way God takes on the role of "the Sweeper" in the life of a believer.

God takes care of us as we face **all sorts of attacks** - that apart from His intervention - would leave us in serious trouble; not only insecure or anxious but bitter, twisted, broken and hurting in the spiritual wilderness.

My intention over the next few weeks is to study the latter chapters of Genesis where we will **meet Joseph**. His father, Jacob, summed up his life with these words...

*Genesis 49:23 The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely,*

The archers were not literal men **with bows and arrows** but rather we will that Joseph was victimized by his own brothers who hated him, he was forcibly displaced into slavery, he knew the meaning of injustice, illicit sexual temptation tugged at his desires, bitterness and thoughts of revenge must have stirred within his heart...

**And yet** Joseph rose above those attacks because God – the Sweeper.

Like Joseph many of us have been or are or will be under **some kind of attack**.

Knowing the power of God who acts with good redemptive purposes – can help you and me address our insecurities because of things like... hatred, malicious victimization, injustice, estrangement, sexual indiscretion, bitterness / unforgiveness

We will see that the life of Joseph demonstrates God's good redemptive purposes ultimately expressed and secured by **the redeeming work of Jesus** on the cross.

Already in the light of Genesis 1 revealing the power and good purposes of God **impacting your understanding** of *Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

There is no need to end of buckling or being destroyed. God is powerful and he is good. He **can be trusted** as the One who is in control working all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purposes.