

**God's Plans, God's Hands****Psalm 31:15**

The word risk has been defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as the possibility of suffering harm or loss; a course involving uncertain danger.

According to Wikipedia, “risk is the potential that a chosen action or activity (including the choice of inaction) will lead to a loss (an undesirable outcome). The notion implies that a choice having an influence on the outcome exists (or existed). Potential losses themselves may also be called “risks”. Almost any human endeavor carries some risk, but some are much more risky than others.”

I am now less than two days away from surgery. When Robyn and I first began to discuss options other than the current procedure of steroid injections in the back there was the process of searching for a provider that would be covered under her insurance plan. That narrowed the field considerably. The insurance company provided a list of names to consider most of whom had their practices down in the Clarkston area. That was too far. So the list was furthered narrowed down to just two neurosurgeons. Both were in the Genesys healthcare system so I contacted Rhonda and discussed with her the two physicians. Being both a nurse at Genesys and a back patient she had a unique perspective to offer, so I wanted her insight.

While both were competent, one had better credentials, greater experience and as an added bonus is a brother in Christ. We moved forward with an appointment to meet with him and discuss what options were available. He was very cordial and soft spoken. He discussed my condition including the previous methods of relieving the back pain which he had concluded were effective only to a point of bringing me temporary relief but now it was time to consider moving forward with surgery or continue on the same path of minimal relief.

He concluded our appointment by indicating that even this particular surgery has risks which he spelled out. Statistically he said there is a 4-6% risk of complications occurring.

1. It may not produce the long term effect hoped. I may still have to deal with nerve pain and nerve damage.
2. It may result in the development of scar tissue that in itself can press on the nerve and create the same pain.
3. It may result in some kind of infection entering the body because of the incision.
4. It may result in paralysis.

That last risk is a sobering thought. Now I need to interject here that in my discussion with Rhonda about this particular doctor, she asked a very important question when she met with him about her own back pain. When told the statistics she asked “and what is your risk rate?” He told her it was 2-3%. While better it still leaves a 3% margin of risk.

According to our definition of risk there is risk if I do something and there is risk if I do nothing. So either way there is risk involved. **What should I do?** Well, for sure pray! So we are moving forward with surgery.

As if that weren't enough, a couple of weeks ago I went in for my annual physical. They did the obligatory blood work which came out fine. They did an EKG as well which showed nothing telling except that my pulse was low – 51. That isn't abnormal to me. It's always been low. I've always attributed it to be good exercise. The day I went in for my physical it was 41. Given the Blood pressure medication I am on it was a concern to the doctor, so he told me to stop taking my BP medicine to see if the pulse would come up. Robyn checked my pressure each day and when it spiked one day to stroke level and my pulse was still in the low 40's

we decided I should start taking my BP medicine again and call the doctor with the several days' worth of numbers. He wanted me to come in and get fitted with a Holter monitor that does a 24 hour EKG. At the end of the time period I returned and we looked at the results. He was concerned about an infrequent arrhythmia that occurred mostly while sleeping. He doesn't think it would come to it but he wants me to see a cardiologist to discuss a pace maker if necessary.

During this time I also had my eye exam. It revealed what I already knew that my lens prescription would need to be increased some. What I did not know because it is very subtle is that I have some kind of rippling effect in both eyes around the edges of the cornea. In addition he informed me that in the right eye there is the slight beginning of wet macular degeneration. At my age he said it can become very aggressive vs. those who get it later in life. He said it may not get worse but be prepared. His "bedside" manners were a little distressing as well. He said if it does happen, oh well, enjoy today.

Over the past number of months I have become more acutely aware of the frailty of the human body. As my Mom used to say, getting old isn't for wimps. I don't necessarily like that I'm getting older but it's happening and I have to learn to deal with the changes that are taking place whether I like it or not, so I might as well accept it because there isn't anything except the rapture that will change it. No amount of Grecian formula, anti-aging wrinkle free cream can alter the effects of aging.

Risks abound. **How should we handle such news?** In anticipation of and in preparation for my surgery and well, for life in general, please take your Bibles and turn to **Psalm 31:15**. If you were unable to be here for Sunday school I played a tape of my Mom's testimony from 1984 in which she shared about the impact of this verse during her first bout with cancer in 1975.

As I have pondered this verse I would like to share several impactful truths I have come to learn and embrace in anticipation of this surgery on Tuesday. I pray they will be just as impressionable for you as they have been for me. What I have come to understand more implicitly is God's plan for me personally. There are six truths I want to leave with you related to this passage about the plan God has for each of us. This plan includes risk, but with the risk there comes a sweet assurance of peace because this is His plan. God never makes mistakes. Not one

It's a personal plan

It's a peaceful plan

It's a present plan

It's a protective plan

It's a perfect plan

It's a powerful plan

## I. IT'S A PERSONAL PLAN – "MY"

The Psalmist begins with a personal pronoun – "MY." As you read through this particular Psalm and there are many others just like it, you notice that David is praying for deliverance. Sometime in David's rule he was confronted with a conspiracy by others that as one author put it was **"so powerful and open that David's friends abandoned him."** Someone was out to get him. Let's read through this Psalm and notice the despair David was feeling beginning at verse 1.

Imagine how alone David must have felt to have all his friends leave him. How despairing it must have been to have to look over his shoulder every time he went out because he didn't know if his conspirators were around some corner waiting in ambush.

Notice that verse 5 is the same words Jesus used as He hung on the cross. Like David there wasn't anywhere else to turn, no one was there to comfort Him in His time of greatest agony, no one except God. Remember that. David knew where to turn.

From this opening word I want you to understand that God has a personal plan for each one of us. He

has a plan that demonstrates His love for us. It is tailor made just for you and for me. No two plans are alike. They may run along seemingly parallel tracks but they are unique to you alone. This plan began even before you were created in the womb. Nothing takes God by surprise when it comes to the events of your life.

### **Psalm 139:1-18**

From the very beginning God has always been interested in you. Notice in this passage the intimacy with which God knows you, how personally He is acquainted with you. From it I want you to understand that God is a personal God with a personal plan. As some erroneously believe He did not just create the world or you and then just walk away and abandon you to your own undoing. Neither did He create us and then become bored with us leaving Him aloof to our plight. He isn't uncaring nor is He powerless to do anything about life events that assault us and Psalm 139 shows us how personal He is, that He has a plan for each of us.

**Did you notice the personal attention that God gave to the Psalmist?** God formed us and then continues to guide us. There is no place that we can go that God is not already there. He is pursuing an intimate relationship with each of us. It is evident from His very first thoughts of us and then how He fashioned us. I love **verses 17-18. "How precious to ME (emphasis added) are your thoughts, O God! How vast (limitless) is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you."**

When I was a freshman in college we were challenged by the upperclassmen to a game of dodge ball. It was a challenge no aspiring young man can refuse. Friday night we stood glaring down our opponents. Imagine about a 100 guys or so out on a court. As the contest unfolded some were whipping balls others were ducking and darting to avoid getting hit. In the fray and

excitement of the game I dove for a loose ball in the neutral zone at the same time someone from the other team did. There was a head to head collision and now you know that explains a lot about me. I ended up having to leave the game because I had a mild concussion. My best friend and roommate took me back to our dorm room and helped me into bed. He stayed up all night sitting beside me and periodically checking to make sure I was okay. When I awoke in the morning he was still with me.

Because God is personal, we can believe that He is always right beside us in whatever difficult life events we may encounter. He has said He would never leave or forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5**). Often times we go through difficulties or have some physical pain we don't understand. We need to come to recognize and accept His plan as best for us. We need to cast off the notion that we know best the plan we should take and instead trust God's plan to be the best for us. What we encounter in life is for God's glory and for our good.

**Jeremiah 29:11-13a "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the Lord."**

We may question God's plan from time to time and ask why, but don't ever despise His plan or come to despair from His plan. We even consider His plans to be inconvenient, yet they are tailored just for us.

**Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."**

The word "workmanship" means a work of art. You are a canvas on which the Creator of the universe is painting a masterpiece and He is not yet

finished. You are a piece of clay on the potter's wheel where the Master Potter with His hands is fashioning a unique work of art.

Paul in writing to the Philippians (1:6) reminds us that we can be **“confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

Everything this personal God is doing is about conforming us to His image. Every circumstance good and bad are His carving tools used to make us like Him.

He is a personal God and desires to have a personal relationship with each of us, but He won't force His way on us.

Henry Blackaby writes **“God Himself pursues a love relationship with you. He is the One who takes the initiative to bring you into this kind of relationship. He created you for a love relationship with Himself. That is the very purpose of your life. This love relationship can and should be real and personal to you.”**

From Genesis to Revelation we see that God is personal and wants an intimate relationship with His creation. He walked in the garden with Adam and Eve. He talked with Noah and Abraham and the prophets and was a friend with David. He wants a personal relationship with you that begins with our acknowledgment of sin and a need for a Savior who is Jesus Christ. Such a relationship can only begin through Christ. **Have you begun such a journey with a personal God?** Make it happen today. He has a wonderful plan for you.

It's a personal plan.  
It's a peaceful plan.

## II. IT'S A PEACEFUL PLAN – “TIMES”

The word “times” can refer to an event or to circumstances or to an appointed time.

If you were to look at your watch you might notice what time of the day it is. **I have fun with teens on occasion. They will ask if I have a watch. I know they want the time, but wanting to have some fun I tell that that in fact I have a watch and then turn to walk away. After a few seconds I turn back and tell them what they really want to know – the time.** We are consumed with time. Chemistry class starts at 10:00a.m. We eat lunch at 12:00p.m. We have a dental appointment at 3:00p.m. Our favorite show comes on at 8:00p.m. Time waits for no man. It marches on minute by minute. Sometimes we get stressed out because of the time. We get stuck in traffic and realize the time there will make us late for an appointment. We invite company over and stress that we have too much to do before they arrive or that the roast is taking longer to cook.

Time isn't just minutes or hours, it can also be a day of the week or a fixed period such as a season. Scripture speaks of God creating the worlds in six days. It also speaks about seasons such as harvest time or winter time or the time kings go to war.

Time can also be circumstances or events. Jesus speaks about the time the Holy Spirit will come in power. Paul speaks about the time of his conversion and the time of Jesus's death, burial and resurrection. John speaks about the end times when Christ returns. We speak of time as an event. Do you remember the time we went to Georgia for vacation? Do you remember the time we went fishing and you reeled in that old boot? Do you remember the time you had to go to the hospital?

That God has a personal plan tailored for each of us, He also knows about our times. He is in control of all our times. If God is in control of all our times then we can completely trust Him with those times that He has prepared for us. **How will we respond?**

All the minutes of my day, all the circumstances within those minutes are the times He is in control. He is in control of the number of breaths I take and the number of heart beats and when the last one is given, my time will end. If I believe Him and trust Him then no matter what happens, I can be at peace because my times are in His hands.

Jesus was preparing the disciples for the time He would be leaving them. He reassured them with these words from **John 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”**

To the Philippians Paul wrote **“Don’t be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”**  
(Philippians 4:6-7)

Isaiah writes **“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You.”** (Isaiah 26:3)

Scripture reveals to us that there is nothing to fear because all our times are in God’s hand. A realization of this results in a peace that is beyond our comprehension. *Someone asked me this week if I was anxious about surgery. I said that I was anxious in the sense that I’m ready to get this over with, but I’m not anxious or worried about the procedure itself.* I’m confident and at peace in the expertise of the doctor, but I am more confident that my times, this time is in the Lord’s hands regardless of the outcome. I talked to the Lord about the outcome and left it in His hands whatever happens. I don’t know what will happen but God does and I can rest peacefully with confidence in Him. I have a personal God with a personal plan that is a peaceful plan. It is also a present plan.

### III. IT’S A PRESENT PLAN – “ARE”

It doesn’t say my times were in His hands – implying that in the past they were but are not now. It doesn’t say my times will be in His hands implying that they weren’t or aren’t today but will be in the future. Neither does it say that they might be in His hands as if there is uncertainty. It says **“My times ARE in Your hands.”**

While God’s Word reminds us of the history of events as well as providing us with a roadmap of the future, much of His Word is about the present – the here and now. Jesus tells us not to worry about what will happen tomorrow. We are to be ready today. God isn’t just concerned about our future. He is also concerned about our present. Whatever might be our current circumstances and life events, God is present and active in our life.

**Psalm 139:7-8 “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.”**

**Jeremiah 23:24 ““Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. ‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’ saith the Lord.”**

Because God is ever present with us, His plan is a present plan for us.

### IV. IT’S A PROTECTIVE PLAN – “IN”

**“My times are IN your hands...”**

Consider the word ‘IN.’ The dictionary defines it as something that is contained or enclosed by something else. It is within or inside.

That’s a good description of the Christian life. There couldn’t be any better place to be than inside or within the hands of the Father. As it has been



said before “if He brought you to it, He will bring you through it.”

Notice the confidence the Psalmist has in the Lord from Psalm 31. He recognizes that there is only one place to turn for deliverance and protection. He turns to the Lord, not his army, not his palace, not his advisors, not his education, not his bank account. There is only one place and one person who has a protective plan for you.

**Psalm 31:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**

**Romans 8:1, 3, 35-39**

**John 10:27-29 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”**

Again and again throughout Scripture we are confronted with this issue of fear, that when we are in God's hand, we are under His protection. Nothing will happen to us that God will not allow. There are no accidents with God. Now it doesn't mean that God won't allow bad things to happen to you. It does mean that God will be with you when those things happen to you.

If God can protect your eternal destiny because you believe in Christ for salvation and that you will end up in His heavenly Kingdom, then God can protect you on your earthly journey. His plan is protective.

It's a personal plan.

It's a peaceful plan.

It's a present plan.

It's a protective plan.

It's a perfect plan.

## V. IT'S A PERFECT PLAN – “YOUR”

Remember **Jeremiah 29:11**? **“For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord.”** His plans for each of us are perfect. They are designed to be for

His glory and for our good no matter what the event may be: surgery, delays in rehabilitation, financial woes, unemployment, a tough class, an out of control neighbor. They are part of His perfect plan for you. **Can we accept and acknowledge that every life event, even the events we don't understand are all a part of His perfect plan?**

We must conclude and believe in the sovereignty of God and that His sovereignty includes a perfect plan. What compels Him to devise a perfect plan for us is His great love toward us. **Romans 5:5** reminds us that God has **“shed abroad”** or **“poured out His love for us.”** It literally means that He has *flooded* us with His love. Now if God loves us that much, demonstrated for us **“in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,” (Romans 5:8)** if God loved us enough to give us the very best He had to secure salvation for us, you have to figure that God's plan for us is perfect. He won't devise a perfect plan when it comes to salvation and then leave everything else about our daily lives to chance. His perfect plan has an eternal perspective in view. It's a perfect plan because it's His plan. We are reminded quite clearly from **Proverbs 3:5-6** that we are to **“trust in the Lord with all our heart, and not lean on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”** His path comes from a perfect plan. Trust Him to lead you even when it doesn't make sense or if it's a path you would rather not take. **Psalm 23:4** tells us there is nothing to fear, not even death itself, because God is with us. The Psalmist writes that others trust in so many different things, but throughout the day whatever happened to him, he would trust the Lord. **Are you committing all your ways to the perfect plan of the Lord?** There isn't any safer place to be.

From our verse there is one final point that I would make. **“My times are in Your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.”**

It's a powerful plan.

## VI. IT'S A POWERFUL PLAN – “Hands”

Often times when Scripture speaks of hands it is referring to more than just the physical appendage that hangs at the end of our arm that we use for all sorts of activities from texting on our phone to gripping a bat to holding our fork and so on. It is often metaphorical speaking of power and strength. It can convey His authority which involves His direct care, responsibility and rule over us. It suggests possession. Remember that it was Jesus who said nothing can pluck us out of God's hand.

His hand upholds and guides – **Psalm 37:24 “If the Lord delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand.”**

**Psalm 139:10 “Even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.”**

**I Chronicles 29:12 “In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.”**

We read in II Samuel 24 David sinned by counting his army. When he realized his sin he said he would rather fall into the hands of a merciful God than the hands of his enemies.

When our David was little and we would walk from the car to a store, I would tightly hold onto his hand so that my grip would keep him protected and safe. About King Cyrus the Lord said that He had grasped his hand. The Hebrew word for grasped means “to be bound fast, both in the significance of adhesion and strength.” (Strong's concordance) It's like God having a superglue grip on me. God is telling us that a strong bond is made between our hand and His when our hand is in His. Not only is there strength and protection in God's hand, there is love and guidance.

Folks, as long as my hand is tightly grasped in the powerful, protective, guiding, loving hand of God,

nothing will happen to me that God doesn't want to happen.

**Psalm 18:30-32 “As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.”**

**Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah, Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.”**

**Psalm 89:13 “You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand.” ESV**

Here's the thing as we close, we have lots of events in our day, every day that can rob us of trusting God. I'm rather looking forward to surgery, not just for the hope of getting relief from back pain or the ability to do things again that I have been unable to do. I'm looking forward to it so that through it I can see that what God has for me

Is a personal plan

Is a peaceful plan  
Is a present plan  
Is a protective plan  
Is a perfect plan  
Is a powerful plan

There is no simpler truth to this than the song we have sung hundreds of times. Sing it with me.

**Jesus loves me this this I know.**

**For the Bible tells me so.**

**Little ones to Him belong.**

**They are weak but He is strong.**

**Yes, Jesus loves me.**

**Yes, Jesus loves me.**

**Yes, Jesus loves me.**

**The Bible tells me so.**

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In what are you facing today that you need to be reminded that your times are in God's hands? My times are in God's hands: back surgery, vision, even the pulse rate of my heart. Are your times in God's hands? There is no risk when you follow and trust the Lord. We don't walk alone.