

2014 Pastor's Reading List

1. **From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective**, edited by David and Jonathan Gibson. Many people contributed to this scholarly work like: Raymond Blacketer, Carl Trueman, Michael Haykin, Sinclair Ferguson and John Piper to name just a few. This is truly a textbook but it's desire goes beyond the academic. Each article seeks to show beyond a shadow of a doubt how helpful this doctrine of definite atonement is for the Christian's assurance of faith. Not only is the doctrine of definite atonement able to sustain the doctrine of Christian assurance but this work goes so far as to show that is in fact the *grounds* of it. This work can get pretty "heady" at times but each chapter concludes in a way that anyone can understand where the author was going and how it applies to the broader theme of assurance. This is a most complete work of this subject giving the reader some of the best of scholarship of yesteryear along with the great scholarship of today. (667 pages plus a good bibliography and scriptural index with literally hundreds of texts referenced).
2. **IWO JIMA: WORLD WAR II VETERANS REMEMBER THE GREATEST BATTLE OF THE PACIFIC**, by Larry Smith. This is a wonderful book of over 25 stories told by the actual veterans who were there. The sights, sounds and smells...the fears, the confusion, and the leadership are all recounted here in these pages. From Marines of all stripes and positions, including Code Talkers, along with Naval Corpsmen who drove the landing crafts and administrated the landing and management of supplies to a Pharmacist's Mate that won a Medal of Honor. The stories run from riveting to boring but each one has a story to tell that should be heard and remembered by all. This is the battle of all battles for the Marine Corps. Why? Well we sent a total of 75,000 marines to that battle. Of that number 25,000 became casualties, of which nearly 7,000 were killed...33% of all the Marine Corps losses in WWII took place at Iwo Jima. Of the 82 Medals of Honor earned in WWII almost a third were earned on Iwo Jima. Iwo Jima is a tiny little 3 mile by 5 mile, 8 square mile island with 2 airfields, every inch of which had to be captured, every inch of which was contested fiercely with the last Japanese soldier surrendering in 1949, 4 years after the war was over. A great read so that we will never forget.

3. **SI-COLOGY: TALES AND WISDOM FROM DUCK DYNASTY'S FAVORITE UNCLE**, by Si Robertson with Mark Schlabach. I read Phil Robertson's book last year **Happy, Happy, Happy: my Life and legacy as the Duck Commander** and found this one to be as endearing as Phil's book maybe even more so. TV's favorite uncle just got real telling us more of growing up in the Robertson household with Phil and his other siblings, his 25 years of service to his country in the US Army and intimate details concerning his struggles with drinking, smoking, infertility and finding out they had an autistic child when there was very little known about the condition. Si's humor is seen throughout the book but nowhere is it more prominent than in chapters 22- 23 when he tells us about his oldest daughter Trasa. His family, immediate and extended are of utmost important to him...this part is not a part of the act. While he may be considered eccentric by Phil's boys (and he is, by his own admission) he has a heart of pure faith that comes out as he tells of how God has been with him throughout all the times of his life. A great read that will have you laughing and crying but at the end of the read you will once again be laughing at Si's words of wisdom...his funny words! :)
4. **George Washington's Secret Six: The Spy Ring that Saved the American Revolution** by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger. This is another wonderful read about men and women ready, willing, and able to lay down their lives for the good of their country. If the Culper spies had been around when Pres. Kennedy said, *"Ask not what your country can do for you but rather ask what you can do for your country."*...they would have said, *"This is what we have done."* And just like another famous American spy, Nathan Hale, they might have said, *"I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."* Each of these members knew the cost if they were captured by the British...in fact, it seems that one learned it firsthand. Freedom is not free and Washington knew that he could not win the Revolution with manpower alone...untrained, and under provisioned he knew something else would have to give his rag tag group an upper hand and with these wonderful patriots many of whom he never knew personally the war was won. The debt owed to these people is best paid by learning about them and making sure their memory never dies. A great read for anyone who even hints at a love for history.
5. **Gunny' Rules: How to Get Squared Away Like a Marine**, By Gunny R. Lee Ermey. Many of us know this "loveable" guy from his TV shows MAIL CALL and LOCK n LOAD or his famous Geico Insurance commercial as the Marine Corps drill instructor turned psychiatrist. This book was written as a self-help book and I usually don't read these except for when we are talking about

Marine Corps self-help which usually means “**ways to survive the world and live to tell about it.**” There actually are some helpful insight in this book...and it is not all Neanderthal butt-whooping kind of stuff... many of the quotes he compiled for this book are very inspirational. But don’t read this with any hint at biblical truth except where common sense and biblical truth intersect as they so often do. But then providing a Bible study was not his purpose. The last few chapters get extremely personal as he deals with areas of deterioration and inspiration in our country. And then he ends the book “plugging” for many of the products that bear his name happily. If you are not familiar with “The Gunny” it would be a complete waste of your time. But if you are and find him enjoyable this would be an entertaining read.

6. **The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther** by Steven J. Lawson. This is yet another in his series called **A Long Line of Godly Men**. All of them like this one give shortened highlights of these amazing men that God raised up at just the right time. This particular book, while highlighting many of Luther’s accomplishments focuses on his boldness in preaching, teaching and reforming a medieval church that had lost its way and was rejecting the Word of God thus God Himself. As Mr. Lawson says in the book, “*Luther was unflinchingly courageous as he stood in the pulpit, and he was so bold because he was thoroughly biblical.*” Luther was consumed with God’s Word and with making sure others came to know the God of the Bible not the god of men. This little book captures the essence of this bold man of God. He defines boldness this way, “*Speaking up and strongly with daring words. Boldness means a full disclosure of what must be said. Simply put, to be bold in the pulpit is to hold nothing back.*” A wonderful reminder for all called to preach but also for all of us who believe who have been called to proclaim the gospel with boldness in a world lost once again.

7. **Two Solemn Covenants** by Edmund Calamy (1600-1660). What I like about this “pamphlet” is that it shows, just like today, we have a difference of interpretation and understanding even among other Reformed folks. This “pamphlet” supports the view of the Westminster Confession of Faith before the Westminster was finished...covenant of works and covenant of grace. He exposes the other main positions of the time and thoroughly discharges them with sound biblical exegesis for the good of the church and for individuals that enjoy seeing the history and the positions of the church before they became “official dogma” in the eyes of many today.

8. **Think Big**, by Dr. Ben Carson. This name has become well known today - not so much for all the breakthrough surgeries he performed as a world renowned neurosurgeon from John Hopkins - but because of His positions on life and being opposed to Obama care such opposition being made clear at a recent White house Prayer Breakfast, where he was asked to speak. This book was written long before he waded into the fray of politics. My father-in-law gave me this book to read before he died and here is his critique of this book. *"This book is for the extremely rich. This book is for the extremely poor. This book is for the uneducated. This book is for the educated. This person is for the young person. This book is for the older person of any age."* It speaks about a young man who was raised by a poor uneducated but devoted single mother rose to become one of the world's most prominent neurosurgeons.
9. **St. Andrew's Expositional Commentary on Mark: He taught Them as One Who had Authority**, by R.C. Sproul (2013). Yet another sermon series that has been put into the devotion commentary series entitled the St. Andrew's Expositional Commentary Series. R.C.'s style is not always conducive to the way the average person thinks, but this commentary reminds me of what caused me to be drawn to the book the Holiness of God. His style here draws the reader to want to know more of God. This is because these are adaptations of sermons preached on these texts and R.C. is an animated preacher to be sure. His passion for God comes out best when he speaks and so it makes sense that that passion would be communicated into this book. Endorsing a commentary series as a devotional may seem like lunacy but in this case this book is a great devotional read.
10. **Ruler of the Waves**, by J.C. Ryle (1816- 1900). This booklet like, so many hundreds he wrote during this time, was written to expose Christians to God's Word. They existed as "tracts" that were given out to people or that people could give out to their neighbors. Many began as sermons and were extended with fuller explanations. Many others began as a response to events or issues of the day that needed to be dealt with in a way that proclaimed God's position on such events or issues of the day. This particular one is an expanded sermon written for the purpose of getting the "modern" day Christian to get more interactive with the gospels. His premise is that *"it would be well if professing Christians in modern days studied the four gospels more than they do."* He emphasized this so that they/we might actually see the real person of Jesus, not the image they/we have in our minds. For us to be Christ-like disciples we must

know Him so that we can follow Him correctly and so we can correctly show Him to others. J.C. Ryle's one calling in life was to encourage strong and serious Christian living in God's people. This is one of the "tracts" he used to impress this upon the masses. What a difference in these "tracts" and the ones produced today.

11. An All- Consuming Passion for Jesus, Appeals to the Rising

Generation, By John Piper (2014). This book is an edited form of 4 sermons that Dr. Piper gave from 1997 through 2013 at the Passion Conference put on in Atlanta. This conference has grown out of a vision from Isaiah 26:8 which says in the NIV, "...*your name and your renown are the desire of our hearts.*" The people involved with this conference desire to teach young people, college age and above, to know His Name and His renown and make these things the desire of their hearts. The purpose is to develop true disciples...true followers of Christ. Piper has been a speaker at this conference since 1997 and within these almost 200 pages we see his heart over and over again for the next generation to catch fire for Christ in a real way...not necessarily the way the Church is pointing them but the way that the Bible points them. Dr. Piper ministers with this driving vision, "*That God is most gloried in you when you are most satisfied in Him.*" And, "...*the chief end of God is to glorify and enjoy Himself forever.*" He makes it clear in this booklet that God is concerned for His own glory, first and foremost, which is a good thing for His people. This is not what is usually taught in people centered churches who have people focus on an invitation from Christ and/or making a decision for Christ as if you are doing Him a favor and that we could decline the invitation if we want. These things glorify man and his decisions rather than seeking first to glorify God in what He does to us and for us for His own glory.

12. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Leviticus by Gordon J. Wenham (1979). An excellent tool that I have used in my devotional time as I have been journing through Leviticus. This has been a wonderful resource in seeking to understand the commands of God and how they relate to the 21st century believer. I highly recommend this very informative, analytical and devotional commentary on this book that most people ignore since they don't want to see any relevance to God's laws and our lives today.

13. **Echos of Eden** by Jerram Barrs (2013). This is an excellent book outlining how the Christian can assess art, literature, and movies from a biblical context determining what is good and what should or shouldn't be taken into our minds. His approach and his conclusions have not always sat well with the greater Christian community (i.e. his endorsement of the Harry Potter series as a worthy read for children and adults alike, placing them alongside the Chronicles of Narnia and the Lord of the Rings) but he makes great points that show just how short-sighted we can become and how we prefer to sit in our own self-described and self-defined "ruts" of truth as to how we seek to evaluate these things. You may not always agree with this professor at Covenant Theological Seminary who also oversees the Francis Schaeffer Institute there, but he will always leave you thinking.
14. **How to Have a Growing Faith** by the late great Dr. James Montgomery Boice. (First published in 1969) This small booklet is a highlight for any interested in the true sequence of growth as seen in scripture. It is a virtual cornucopia of biblical doctrine stuffed into a small package...that highlights the importance of knowing God so we can trust God so we can love Him with all our heart. This is highlighted by looking at Abraham, the friend of God, from Gen.11:27-Gen. 22. What a lesson that points us to the absolute need to trust in Christ with our all.
15. **Taking God At His Word, Why the Bible is knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me**, (2014) by Kevin De Young. In the best tradition of a J.C.Ryle, a Martin Luther and many of the divines of generations ago, Kevin De Young's "pamphlets or treatises or tracts" seek to speak clearly and definitively on the subjects that seem to be weakening the church today. From topics on busyness, to finding God's will, to filling gaps in our holiness, to discussions on the Trinity, the body of his printed works are direct, yet filled with enough real life that anyone reading them can relate immediately. **Taking God At His Word** is a book that lays out for all who struggle with reading the most important book in our lives the things that will make reading it a desire of the heart. His approach captures the mind and hearts of his readers and doesn't let them go until they are caught up with the same passion that obviously drives him. I find everything he writes to be immeasurably helpful in my life and ministry as a pastor. Besides my own need, by the time I finish reading one of his books I have in mind a few other people who could benefit from his books. Great Stuff.

16. **What is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and patterns**, by James M. Hamilton, Jr. (2014). Not since **Biblical Theology** by Geerhardus Vos has there been a more readable presentation of biblical theology in my opinion. He grasps the BIG picture of Scripture and in this short book seeks to cause us to see it as well. He speaks of studying the Bible in a way that when we read it we are transported from this world into the next. Along the way, he exposes his readers to the simplicity of seeing His story and how the Church fits into that story of redemption from beginning to end. By showing us these points along the way we are drawn into his vision of a people who are shaped and molded by His Story...God's Word.
17. **Delighting in the Law of the LORD: God's Alternative to legalism and Moralism. By Jerram Barrs (2013).** This is one of the best expositions on the purpose of the law in the life of the believer that I have written in some time. The only flaws that I perceive in the book is in some of Jerram's illustrations which are arguably English and sometimes do not reflect the way many here in the States would look at similar issues. But aside from these minor distractions, this is a masterful work helping us to see the purpose and worth of the Law for all who are Christ's today. It is not a "law unto works" but rather a "law of faith". As believers, God, by His grace has given us a road map of His character and what He expects of His children...hence the Law...broken by Adam, fulfilled by Christ, and made new to us who are His giving us the parameters of a God-glorifying life through the freedom found in the law of our LORD.
18. **THE AUSCHWITZ ESCAPE; A NOVEL, by Joel C. Rosenberg (2014).** This is another example of "great" historical fiction. I say great in that he weaves the actual stories of survivors and escapees of one of the world's most terrible places into a readable and engaging novel. Some of the names have been changed but make no mistake, they are based on real live people who survived the most horrendous of days. We see in this story the work of Jews seeking to save others Jews from certain annihilation and we see Christians helping secure safe passage for Jews from Hitler's plan of extinction. Just like with the Underground Railroad during the times of slavery in America, the Christians in Europe did what they could to help save as many people as possible from the Holocaust. There is much introspection here from a Jewish perspective as to why God would do this to them..."again"...just like He had done in the past. The story moves along rapidly to its climax and is captivating all along the way. The reader can't wait to get to the next page. I have never read any of his fiction before but if he writes another historical fiction I will certainly pick it up.

19. **STAR TREK: LOG ONE, by Alan Dean Foster(1974).** Just some fun reading. These stories were adapted to book form from manuscripts from the then animated Star trek series of that time. For any original series Star Trek Fans...this book...one of 10 books continues the voyages of the Starship Enterprise which has comprised much of the Star Trek lore and doctrine.
20. **BASICS OF THE REFORMED FAITH, by Dr. Kim Riddlebarger (2014).** This is an excellent “pamphlet” (143 pages) that highlights the basic and most important parts of Reformed Theology. It does not come in paperback but is free as a Kindle or epub. for iBooks and is a very helpful tool in the march to help people understand the message of the Bible. I wish I could be as succinct as Dr. Riddlebarger for he puts a lot in a little space. Highly recommended reading for clarity and ease in understanding what some have coined as difficult and other heretical.
21. **A CABINET OF JEWELS: THE TOUCHSTONE OF SINCERITY, BY THOMAS BROOKS (1608-1680).** We don’t write like this anymore because people aren’t really searching for answers to such questions like sincerity and hypocrisy. We have our “own” definitions for these and we do not want to be pushed into thinking otherwise. This book touches (166 pages) on the subject of hypocrisy and does a very full job in fleshing out this sin in all its roots. He speaks of hypocrisies that we don’t even consider any longer as the root and foundation of many of the problems of the day (17th Century) that are still problems today. He even speaks of how complacent we are as a church not to point out such things so as not to ruffle too many feathers. He gives a good contrast between the true Christian and the hypocrite...such a good picture that I found myself many time confessing my own hypocrisy of which I had been unaware. These pamphlets were spread far and wide and read with great delight and humility by people from all walks of life because they were searching for answers as to why society had become so decadent. If only people were searching today. But it is good that some are once again writing these small treatises...like Kevin DeYoung, Dr. Riddlebarger and others seeking to stimulate the thoughts of people today.
22. **THE COVENANTS OF WORKS AND GRACE, BY Rev. Walter J. Chantry (1938-).** Rev. Chantry is a Reformed Baptist minister who had been raised in a conservative Presbyterian home. He was the long time pastor at Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle, PA. This “little” work (91 pages) is a masterpiece in describing this doctrine of the covenants. He calls this doctrine “*the marrow of divinity.*” I like that terminology a lot. He explains, “*Without bones the human body would be an unshaped glob of flesh. So, without theology the ideas of scripture would lie in an unshaped mass. Marrow is at the center of the bones which shape our body. So the doctrine of the covenants is at the core of theology, and the health of any theological system depends on its understanding of this*

truth.” Even with this “book” being so small even takes the time at the end to refute dispensationalist teachings as counter to these doctrines. This too can be found on line through www.chapel-library.org.

23. Serving God and Country: U.S. Military Chaplains in World War II, Lyle

Dorsett. This book does a wonderful job of capturing the spirit and the hardship of the military chaplain in WWII. It boldly proclaims the advantages and disadvantages of an embedded chaplaincy. Advantages being the care, nurture, and shepherding of hundreds of thousands of our men and women so far away from home. Also, they received the highest praise of their commanding officers for building and keeping morale high even in the bloodiest of situations whether that be on an unknown island in the South Pacific or in the forests and fields of Europe. These men were alongside the men and women from the foxhole to concentration camps to the hospital ward to supply spiritual and physical needs that could not be performed by any other. Always understaffed...the disadvantage...they were still able to be with hundreds of thousands of troopers, sailors and soldiers. They made an immense impact, one that seems to be lost on today’s military. The generals of the day said that it was the chaplains of the day that kept the military fit for duty. If only they were seen that way today.

24. Crazy Busy: A (mercifully) short book about a (really) big problem, by Kevin

DeYoung, 2013. I very much liked the basic message of this book... *“the reason we are busy is that we are supposed to be busy.”* God created us to work and to do His will it is what brings Him glory. The basic problem is that we have our priorities all messed up. The busyness that is bad is not the busyness of doing the work God has called us to do, but rather the busyness that works hard at the wrong things...the things we want to do or the things that we think will make us better, stronger and more mature at the expense of the expressed work that God says we are to be doing. Because we miss the focus of the mission God gives us we are overwhelmed. This is a great book for parents who live in what has been coined as a “Kindergarchy”...over programming their children and the type of lifestyle that creates for the family and the child...a cycle of unbiblical busyness that will lead to frustration and a lack of contentment in the things of the Lord. A good read.

25. Good Call: Reflections on Faith, Family, and Fowl by Jase Robinson, 2014. Having read Phil’s book which was okay and then Uncle Si’s book which I thought was wonderful, I have to now say that this one was the best. Theologically we would have some issues about the whole “choosing the Lord” approach to evangelization, but at least he has devoted his life to presenting the gospel - and if even half of the stories are true - God has used him mightily in presenting the gospel and seeing many come into the church and then be discipled in God’s Word. This is perhaps the most interesting part of

this book. On TV we see a maniac when it comes to duck hunting, frogging and eating frog legs (which are quite good by the way) and making excellent duck calls. His excellence in these is, however, passed up by His love to tell others about the Lord and his love for his family. This is a good read...fun...entertaining and inspirational even if he does spend a lot of time talking about how we have to make the choice to be saved.

26. **Distinctives of Biblical Presbyterianism, by John Otis (2014).** Rev. Otis is an ordained RPCUS pastor (formerly a PCA pastor) that is currently writing Bible Study courses for Reformation Christian Ministries. This is one of the most recent “pamphlets to be produced by him and is extremely informative and helpful for anyone seeking to understand what being a biblical Presbyterian means for today and why the distinction is important. A helpful little booklet that covers all the main distinctives of biblical Presbyterianism. This along with Dr. Kim Riddlebarger’s helpful little pamphlet **Basics of the Reformed Faith** contain in short form the essence of biblical Christianity.
27. **5 Things Every Christian Needs to Grow by R.C. Sproul (2008).** I am not usually drawn to books that give us a step by step methodology to Christian holiness, but every so often a book comes down the “pike” that is an extremely helpful tool for the Christian struggling to discover how to grow in a way that enables us to walk in God’s ways. John Stott’s book, **Radical Disciple**; Jerry Bridges book, **The Pursuit of Holiness**; and even R. Kent Hughes’ book, **Disciplines of a Godly Man** are such books to be sure. Now this one by R.C. which I admit was not aware of until a couple of months ago can be numbered among those books listed above that every true follower of Christ ought to read at some point in their Christian walk. R.C. highlights 5 disciplines that will enable us to give “our utmost for His highest.” These 5 are: Bible study, prayer, worship, service and stewardship and when we train hard in these we will be found glorifying and enjoy God forever.
28. **Seeing Beauty and saying Beautifully: The Power of Poetic Effort in the Work of George Herbert, George Whitefield, and C.S. Lewis; by John Piper (2014)** This is book 6 of The Swans Are Not Silent series. (I have critique 3 others a couple of years ago.) Each book of The Swans Are Not Silent series focuses on 3 renowned leaders of Church History, offering a close look at each and the impact their lives had...have...on the church even today. At first glance this might be looked at as a book for preachers and it is but it is a book for all who seek to preach and teach God’s Word in a way that speaks to the heart of those around us. Since faith and all its fruit come by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17) then how we say things are just as important as what is said. From the authors own words, *“The Word in the Bible is pervasively eloquent...words are put together in a way to give great impact. And God invites us to create our own fresh phrases for His glory, not ours. And in the mystery of His sovereign*

grace, He will glorify Himself in us and in the hearts of others in spite of and because of the words we have chosen. In that way, He will keep us humble and get all the glory for Himself.” There is a reason why we say things like “We don’t talk or write like that anymore...” when we read the classics... because we don’t. Dr. Piper reminds us that we can again as long as we, in the frame of mind as those classic writers, seek to bring glory to the Author of words using them appropriately to move the hearts of men toward the heart of the Father.

29. There is No Alternative, Why Margaret Thatcher Matters, by Claire Berlinski

(2011). Such an interesting read for anyone interested in the time changing years of the 80’s. History will record that the 3...Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher were THE movers and shakers that set in motion monumental changes in our lives...not the least of which was the downfall of the Soviet Union and the exposure of the two oppressive political systems called socialism and communism. One of the things I didn’t realize that I would get from this book was a pretty extensive tutorial on the economics of the time and how those are even today still affecting especially the UK of today. Margaret Thatcher saw an evil in socialism that was crippling her country and she sought to kill it completely and she almost succeeded. She did succeed in that for the past couple of decades it has not been that influential on the island. She had enormous success in bringing down the Trade Unions who were fostering socialism and limited free-enterprise hence limiting the influence of a nation and crippling its people. She was a force of which has not been seen since and probably will not be seen again since there are very few post WWII leaders left to make a difference...and even fewer that care about such things as national pride and sovereignty, leaning more towards globalization which destroys both of these characteristics that keep and make a nation strong. A great read!

30. A Treatise on Grace and Free Will by St. Augustine (AD 426 or 427). This is

Augustine’s definitive word on this topic as he debated the Pelagian movement at the time that led eventually to its condemnation by the Church. This is extremely helpful treatise because it is made up of at least 50% Scripture proofs. Augustine did not want his opinion to be on display...but rather the Word of God. he lets the Word of God speak for itself and this is extremely enlightening for the reader and I would suppose as it was for the original hearers who were trying to make heads or tails out of this discussion. This is a short treatise...only 176 pages... in contrast to the volumes that have been written on this subject since. And I believe it to be the clearest approach to what many say is an unclear subject. And this can be found on line for free from many sources so I would highly recommend it to your reading. I have read it before while I was in seminary and had forgotten...or maybe never fully appreciated the simplicity with which he proves his point from Scripture. The reader will need to read the whole thing to get the full thrust of his argument. You might find yourself wondering what he is saying but keep reading he makes it all clear in a short time.

31. **St. Cyprian on The Lord's Prayer** (AD 250). For hundreds of years after it was first published this work was such a standard and so well known that when someone was preaching through this section of Matthew or Luke they would simply refer to this work rather than re-exposit the work anew. Also included at the end of this small book (296 pages) is the work by Tertullian on the Lord's Supper which seems to have been the rough outline that Cyprian used in fully expositing this beloved prayer of our Lord. This, too, can be found on line for free and is highly recommended as a definitive exposition on the Lord's Supper for its simplicity and power.
32. **The Story of the Puritans** by Erroll Hulse (an English Reformed Baptist pastor and co-founder of Banner of Truth Trust) Again another masterpiece in its simplicity. There is much speculation about the Puritans throughout the history books of our age. This "little" book (147 pages) says volumes in defense of these Nonconformists and true believers of their time. They were a joyful lot seeking for the earth to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. The Puritans placed a great stress on the spiritual experience of God's free grace in conversion and as such regard their justification and sanctification in joy. Even in times of hardship they taught patience in suffering for their God whom they were called upon to glorify and enjoy forever would deliver them. Another great read that you can get for free on line in .pdf form.
33. **The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts**, by Douglas Bond (2013). This is yet another volume in the Long Line of Godly Men series from Reformation Trust. So far this series has highlighted John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, John Knox, Charles Spurgeon and Martin Luther. This volume covers the life and calling of Sir Isaac Watts known in church history as the father of English Hymnody. The book begins with these words, *"Down through the centuries, God has providentially raised up a long line of godly men, whom he has mightily used at strategic moments in church history... Each man possessed an unwavering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and held deep convictions in the God-exalting truths known as the doctrines of grace."* His best known hymns perhaps out of the 750 or so that he wrote in his life time are, *Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed, Joy to the World! The Lord is Come, When I Survey the Wondrous Cross and Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*. These hymns and many others have warmed the hearts of the church for over 300 years. But the sad story is that in our present age hymns such as these are being put in mothballs and replaced with "contemporary" songs that take the emphasis off God and place it where we believe it needs to be placed... on our experience. And as such the church is languishing in mire of self-importance and not being bolstered by the time honored words of Scripture put to song for us to sing in good and bad times to the glory of God. Isaac Watts re-emphasized the message of the Psalter that all of life is to be a doxology. Watt's father told him, *"What Christian's sing in worship must be guided by what God has revealed about how we are to sing to such a God."* What we sing is to be

first and foremost guided by the word of God...what a novel thought. We need his inspired insight again today so that our worship service can once again be full, uplifting and most importantly God- honoring. I highly recommend this book and this series of books. Some of the best 300 pages of reading you can have.

34. **In-Depth Creation Basics and Beyond: An In-Depth Look at Science, Origins and Evolution**(2013). This book is put out by the Institute for Creation Research to help God's people especially see the truth behind biblical creation and the theory of evolution. These folks changed the way I looked at the book of Genesis so many years ago. This book includes the scientific papers of many of the contributors from the Institute dealing with everything from biblical interpretation to the physics of creation. Within these pages are wonderful discussion concerning the majesty of God as seen in molecules and DNA...the very foundation of creation. Also, there are many refutations of evolution from a scientific perspective. Science does not stand in opposition the Scripture in and of itself...it is the presuppositions of those who stand opposed to God that creates the problem. This book runs from being extremely simple to extremely technical but through it all biblical in its intent to show evolution to be a sham.
35. **The U.S. Army's First, Last, and Only All-Black Rangers: The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) in the Korean War 1950-1951**, By Master Sergeant (Ret.) Edward L. Posey (2011). This is a book of bravery...bravery on the battlefield to be sure but also one of bravery in the US Army at a time when racial conflicts were common even among fellow soldiers. This book chronicles the stories of these brave men through induction into Ranger training and their experience through the early stages of the Korean War until they were deactivated by a War Department unwilling or unable at the time to admit the worth of these men of color. These men ended their careers with an outstanding combat record and it is finally being told in this wonderfully written 1st hand accounting by the author who was one of them and by others who survived this harrowing ordeal. We all need to read such accounts so that we can remember the sacrifices made on our behalf and on behalf of others in need.
36. **ESCAPE FROM THE DEEP:The Epic Story of a Legendary Submarine and Her Courageous Crew, BY ALEX KERSHAW (2008)**. I have never read this author before but after reading this book about the survival of some of the men of the USS Tang, the most decorated submarine and crew in WWII, I think I may pick up a couple of more of his books as well. This book recalls the history of this great boat and her captain Commander Dick O'Kane. By the time of its sinking it had brought down more than 30 ships...the most ever. And it was sunk not by the enemy but by an errant torpedo shot out from within it. The boat lost 78 men with only 9 survivors who were later picked up by a Japanese patrol boat and were brutalized and taken to concentration camps in Japan until

their liberation at the wars end. This is a true story of courage and survival during WWII. This ranks right up there with such books as **Unbroken**.

37. **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine- Avatar**, by S.D. Perry (2001). This is the first book of a two part series that ultimately leads to the return of Capt. Benjamin Sisko from the Celestial Temple where he was sent by the “prophets” after the conclusion with his fight against the Pah-Wraiths to save Bajor from the evil plot by Kia Winn and Gul Dukat. The twist and turns that set up the 2nd book are as good as watching a full season of Star Trek on TV. The author captures these characters and their subsequent actions in a way that brings them back to life years after the TV series concluded with Capt. Sisko saying that he would return. A fun read for those who were and are true Star Trek fans.
38. **Contending for Our All: Defending Truth and Treasuring Christ in the Lives of Athanasius, John Owen, and J. Gresham Machen**, by John Piper (2006). This is the 4th book in “The Swans are Not Silent” series of books highlighting the “swans” that have continued speak throughout history in this case “Contending For Our All” in the face of great adversity. Starting with Athanasius in this book, he contended for our all by standing up to the heresy of Arianism under great persecution and struggle. Never backing down his work on the dual natures of Christ has work its way into the very fiber of our faith and our confessions. John Owen came on the scene as the Puritan of Puritans while driving home the doctrine of communion with Christ as a constant theme and goal. Study in the Word is essential to our communion with Christ. And then last but not least in this book is the “short” recounting of J. Gresham Machen's seemingly one man stand against Liberalism/Modernism...another religion as he called it for it stood in opposition to historic Christianity as much as any cult of the day. He called for classic Calvinistic Christianity to blossom...in other words he called upon all true believers to be authentic in our faith and especially with the language we use to express that faith. Once again, an on-going and regular study of God’s word cements a God-centered vision on all reality...a truly biblical world and life view is essential for Christians to be authentic. It is in this that we can all be found contending for our All.
39. **Filling Up The Afflictions of Christ: the Cost of Bringing the Gospel to the nations in the lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson and John Paton**, by John Piper (2009). This is book 5 of “the Swans Are Not Silent” series. This will conclude these book in this series for now as I read and critiqued the sixth book earlier in the year **Seeing Beauty and saying Beautifully: The Power of Poetic Effort in the Work of George Herbert, George Whitefield, and C.S. Lewis**. This book deals with 3 of those who suffered to spread the Gospel of Christ to the world... “*Filling up what is lacking in Christ’s affliction...*” is part of a scripture verse from Col. 1:24 and basically means it is NOT that Christ’ affliction are somehow deficient...No, Paul is saying that the immense

worth of Christ's affliction is not known and understood by most people in the world. These must be taught by faithful pastors and Bible translators and missionaries and these folks complete what is lacking in that people come to understand which then extends their understanding and appreciation for the work of Christ. Wm. Tyndale was one who brought the Scriptures to England without the expressed acceptance by the Roman Catholic Church, which believed it held the only rights to the Scriptures. Tyndale wished to put the Word of God into the hands of the common man...the RCC vehemently opposed this work to the point of his martyrdom. John Paton brought the gospel of Christ to cannibals of all people. Adoniram Judson was a missionary and Bible translator in Burma. Excellent reads are all of these books, showing how the voices of God's people still call out to all in the church to be faithful witnesses to the Word, no matter the cost.

40. **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine- Unity**, by S.D. Perry (2004). I thought this was the follow up to the **Avatar** book above, but it just so happens that there are about 6 other books written in between here... a couple by the author and 3-4 written by another author dealing with filling in the story line started by Perry. That is the thing about Star Trek books they seem to take on a life of themselves. Having said that though, at the beginning of this book the author gives us a time line of events that have occurred since we finished with the original book in the series **Avatar, Part 1**. And with this timeline we are brought back up to speed with the newest threat...a parasite race that we first met on the Enterprise in The Next Generation TV show as they were trying to take over Starfleet so that they could eventually destroy the planet and the people of Trill, a long lost adversary. This book also deals with a much anticipated homecoming of a wayward and wandering captain.
41. **A Soliloquy on the ART OF MAN-FISHING**, by Thomas Boston (1699). This soliloquy is as relevant today as it was then. Boston's comments are both helpful and convicting. This little work was written primarily for ministers of the gospel, but all will benefit. He begins with the words of Jesus in Matthew 4:19 – "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*". He observes that in this text there is a duty (*follow me*) and a promise (*I will make you fishers of men*). In typical Puritan fashion, he then divides his comments into a very detailed outline. The two main parts are: (1) That it is the Lord Jesus Christ that makes men fishers of men; (2) That the way for me to be a fisher of men is to follow Christ (p. 14-43). This work reminds us of several important things: (1) the importance of the work of preaching in saving souls; (2) our dependence upon God in the accomplishing of this monumental task; and (3) the need for our hearts to be burdened for the people to whom we preach. It is good to read these older books to remember we aren't the first ones with these interpretations and also to know that we are walking correctly. C.S. Lewis once said, "*It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to every three new ones...*" (112 pages).

42. **THE DEATH OF CHRIST**, by James Denney (1911 revision of the 1902 original). James Denney, DD was a Scottish theologian and preacher who lived from 1856-1917. This work, written by a scholar/pastor was obviously written to refute the scholars of Higher-Criticism as he sets out to disprove their assertions and to elevate the penal substitution theory of the atonement that has been a part of biblical doctrine for years and had been coming under fire by those who even question the validity of much of the New Testament. This scholarly work is not easy to read, as it is written for the scholarly community. However, having said that it is one of the best books written on the substitutionary atonement in the 20th Century.
43. **SIX BITS A DAY**, by Elmer Kelton. This book is the “prequel” to **THE GOOD OLD BOYS** written in 1978 and then **THE SMILING COUNTRY** (1998) that introduced the carefree “fiddle footed” cowboy Hewey Calloway. Six bits or 75 cents a day was the cowboys daily wage in an era long since past. This book talks about Hewey and his brother Walter’s move from East Texas to west Texas to become cowboys and how Hewey took to the life better never wanting to settle down even willing to be paid less money than to have extra responsibilities other than a cowboy.
44. **THE GOOD OLD BOYS**, by Elmer Kelton. True cowboys were called “good old boys” and these were slowly dying off in Hewey’s 1906 West Texas area. Not only were the cowboys becoming a thing of the past but so were the free-range and even the horse. The land was being parceled up with fences...people were settling down and getting hitched...like his brother Walter...and worst of all the car was coming...in fact, it was already there seeking to take the place of the horse in so many way. As progress keeps marching forward Hewey comes to realize that the west of his childhood was disappearing and he is determined to slow its progress especially in his own life.
45. **THE SMILING COUNTRY**, by Elmer Kelton. Hewey Calloway was what was called a “fiddle footed” cowboy...carefree and a roamer...always looking to the next smiling country...pure and untarnished spread of land. But these were quickly becoming a thing of the past. As Hewey aged he noticed things like the cowboys were becoming more reckless (as if he had not been) the loose lifestyle with no responsibilities was beginning to catch up with him. He still did everything from a horse like a good cowboy should but it was getting harder and harder to do his job. Everyone around him except him could see that he was aging...even a lost love...but he was unwilling to be put out to pasture...not yet. But then there was one more smiling country that drew him...a lost love re-found and the West Texas Big Bend country where he eventually settles.

46. **CLOUDY IN THE WEST**, by Elmer Kelton (1997). It has been said that Elmer Kelton is the Mark twain of Texas fiction stories... and I would have to concur with that assessment. Each page of his books are genuine and authentic and this one is no exception. This is a story of a little boy who has lost everything dear to him...first his mother, then his father marries a woman of little compassion to be a mother to Joey, but then in an unexplainable accident after his father dies, when their trusted worker Rueben is found mysteriously dead, he winds up in the care of his step-mother Dulcie and her "cousin" Blair. All he had left was his father's land that his father left to him in his will, instead of his step-mother, but he is due to lose that as well because of a ruthless step-mother and her "new" husband...her former "cousin." Does this sound convoluted yet...well that's all in just the first few pages. The rest is penned in a marvelous race against time and forces almost beyond this 12 year old's wildest dream as he becomes a man reclaiming his land in this timeless tale.
47. **BITTER TRAIL**, by Elmer Kelton (1962). This book is set during the Civil War in the South Texas border town of Brownsville as Southern sympathizers were freighting cotton and other good to be sold to the Mexicans, the English and the French, in exchange for arms to supply the South's war effort. It is also about the classic struggle of brothers and friends being on opposite sides of this war and the inevitable confrontations that this requires. Kelton shows historically how the war was fought on Texas soil and though it is fiction every page could be real. This is a great tale of overcoming adversity in the midst of a stubborn refusal to see a conflict through the eyes of another...especially one's best friend.
48. **PECOS CROSSING**, by Elmer Kelton (1963). This book was formally known as **Horsehead Crossing** in remembrance of a famous river crossing on the Pecos that had claimed many a teamster and cowboy. Johnny Fristo and Speck Quitman were inseparable....but they are as different as night and day. Johnny had been raised in an intact family and brought up on Christian values while Speck had been raised in a broken home and basically raised himself. Johnny's values guided him and Speck but Speck's lust for whiskey, women and cards often found them in trouble or Johnny doing everything he could to get Speck out of trouble. This story revolves around the boys being cheated out of a winters pay and their trek to get it back. Along the way they "accidentally" run afoul of an ex-Texas Ranger (if there is such a thing) and the story turns to death, rage and constant turmoil for the boys and others. A gripping tale that is hard to put down even as you read the last words on the last page.

49. **TIME OF THE RANGER, Volume II: from 1900 to the Present**, by Mike Cox (2009). This is Volume II to another great work of fiction called **THE TEXAS RANGERS: WEARING THE CINCO PESO, 1821-1900** (2008). Both of these works tell the story of our Texas Rangers. He has a tendency to be a bit harsh towards the “antics” of some of the Rangers that got results against some of the most hardened criminals of our day, even if their tactics weren’t by the book...a book by the way that most criminals don’t read. But all in all, these works are a well-balanced picture of these legends of law enforcement. It also catalogs all the changes that occurred in order for them to stay formidable in their duties. The stories and the people are real and very little of the details are left out. No one is protected...everyone exposed but in the end you are still left with the feeling that we in Texas especially can sleep better at night knowing that the Texas Rangers are always on the job. Put this work right next to Walter Prescott Webb’s classic work called **THE TEXAS RANGERS** and the contemporary works of Joaquin Jackson, **ONE RANGER : A Memoir** and **ONE RANGER RETURNS**.
50. **TEXAS HIGH SHERIFFS**, by Thad Sitton (1988). This is a book written to honor the rural sheriffs of Texas highlighting 11 different sheriffs. The “high sheriff” was the one who held absolute power over the county courthouse, and the county itself. He was looked at sort of like the Sheriff of Nottingham in the myth of Robin Hood...as lord high protector as well as lord high tyrant if the power fell to the wrong men. This book, while seeking to honor these men of old, does not do a good job of this. It is edited poorly and the stories it tells are not of particular import to the state at large. You will actually find out about more sheriffs and their character in reading the above books on Texas Rangers, for these authors do a great job in telling the stories of many brave sheriffs as well as many scoundrels...much better than this book.
51. **WELCOME TO A REFORMED CHURCH: A GUIDE FOR PILGRIMS**, by Rev. Daniel Hyde (2010). Rev. Hyde is a pastor in Carlsbad, CA and he is a member of the United Reformed Church of North America. This is an extremely helpful tool to give to someone who is searching for a church home...someone who is struggling with the church they are in and/or to the one who is genuinely seeking to know about this “abnormality” called the reformed faith. Rev. Hyde shows just how within the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions one can actually find the teaching of the Bible clearly. He talks of the doctrines of the church historically; confessionally and then how they apply to our contemporary situation in a clear and helpful way, that even a novice of the Bible and biblical doctrine might understand. This book stands well with such books as **WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY**, by R.C. Sproul; **PUTTING AMAZING BACK INTO GRACE**, by Michael Horton; **KNOWING GOD**, by J.I. Packer; and **BASICS OF THE REFORMED FAITH**, by Dr. Kim Riddlebarger.

52. **WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER** by R.C. Sproul (2009). This booklet (100 pages or so) is part of the crucial questions series of 14 booklets (I think) that have been gleaned from R.C.'s writing to answer particular questions quickly and clearly for the believer who is seeking to bolster his ability to explain his faith and why he does what he does in the faith. This one on the Lords' Supper is as good an explanation as to why we do this as I have ever seen. These are all available for free as eBooks.
53. **DOES PRAYER CHANGE THINGS**, by R.C. Sproul (2009). In this booklet, R.C. expounds on the place, the purpose, the pattern, the practice, the prohibitions and the power of prayer. Excellent source that will help you clarify for your own soul and then others who wonder about the whole idea of why Christians pray when we serve a sovereign God who knows all things and has ordained all things before they even come to pass. I read these two so that I might be able to recommend the whole series, which I would wholeheartedly do.
54. **THE TRUE BOUNDS OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM**, by Samuel Bolton (1645). In the world of Puritan literature, this one was definitely among the easier to read. In this work, Bolton's aim was to make clear the relationship of the law and Christian freedom. There has been (and still is) a certain sense of ambiguity in the church as to the correct approach to these issues. Some will claim their freedom over all kinds of things they shouldn't, while some who ought to be free to live in move are paralyzed for lack of understanding of their true freedom in Christ. In nine chapters and over 350 pages, Samuel Bolton endeavors to thoroughly answer each of the following questions: 1) Does our being made free by Christ free us from the law? 2) Does our being made free by Christ deliver us from all punishments or chastisements [from God] for sin? 3) Is it consistent with Christian freedom to be under obligation to perform duties because God has commanded them? 4) My Christ's freedmen come into bondage again through sin? 5) Is it consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties out of respect or the recompense of the reward? 6) Does the freedom of a Christian free him from all obedience to men? And his answer is one of the best biblical explanation proved to the church at that time and for all time. A good read.
55. **SILMARILLION**, J.R.R. Tolkien, (edited by Christopher Tolkien after his father's death. 1977). What an unexpected journey this book is/was...one that I would not have taken at a younger age, as I was not content, then, to have an adventure without going anywhere physically, thinking rather that imagination was far inferior to actual hands-on adventure. But now? What a wonderful read and imaginative journey from the beginning when the world was sung into existence through the Third-Age and the rise of men. As Christopher Tolkien says, *"This is an account of the Elder Days...and these are the legends deriving from a much deeper past...and as such all of these writing in this book*

are the entire history as set forth from the Music of the Ainur in which the world began to the passing of the Ringbearers from the Havens of Mithlond at the end of the Third Age.” This book actually contains 5 writings of Tolkien that he worked on throughout his lifetime that were meant to be put in writing but his death prevented him from finishing these so the work was left to his son and another. The works are **Ainulindale** (The Music of the Ainur...the beginning of the whole world), **Valaquenta** (the account of the Valar or angels of Eru, the One), **Quenta Silmarillion** (The History of the Silmarils...holy stones of the Elves...the Firstborn), **Akallebeth** (The Downfall of the Numenor or the Dunedain of which Aragorn would come), and **Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age**. This is a wonder for all who consider themselves Tolkien and Middle-earth fans. If you haven’t read this then you can’t fully grasp the background of many of the happening even in **The Lord of the Rings** books. His grasp of the Bible also comes through to those who have eyes to see and hears to hear.\

56. **THE BRUISED REED**, BY Richard Sibbes (1630). In his book **The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax**, the Puritan preacher Richard Sibbes provides a tenderhearted, Christ-exalting exposition and application of **Isaiah 42:1-3**. Sibbes follows Matthew’s interpretation of this text, seeing it to be fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:18-20). His exposition breaks down into three basic parts: (1) Christ will not break the bruised reed; (2) Christ will not quench the smoking flax; (3) Christ will not do either of these things until he has sent forth judgment into victory. Since its initial publication, **The Bruised Reed** has been a source of encouragement to dejected sinners and struggling saints alike. This little booklet which only comprises the slightest of the vastness of his printing has caused me to want to read more. From it’s beginning his words comfort and assure his readers in ways that seem foreign when talking and writing about doctrinal issues. A couplet was written about Sibbes after his death that captures this well: *“Of that good man let this high praise be given: Heaven was in him before he was in heaven.*

57. **THE HOBBIT**, By J.R.R. Tolkien (1937, 1966). Way back in the 60’s and 70’s when others were reading these works I took up the Hobbit and couldn’t get into it at all. I wasn’t much into reading then (comic books maybe if anything) but I was also not into this kind of reading to be sure since it took work...figuring out all the names and places...not to say anything about the complicated (complicated in the sense that I didn’t want to read it, so by virtue of that it was complicated) speech patterns. But now all these years later, having read **The Lord of the Rings**, and **The Silmarillion**, this book became a joy to read...real fun, especially since I am also watching the movies as they come out. What makes these books fun at this point in life for me I think is that I have come to a place of realizing beauty in words when I read them. Having read the Scriptures through so many times now I have come away with a greater appreciation for things written well and with intent, for these are not simply fun stories written about a place called Middle earth. They do indeed reflect the world we live in that is under the domination and

influence of sin and how much in need of redemption men are. They also reflect the fact that all of creation is being watched over and that all things are moving forward as part of a grand plan...or drama, if you will. But it is not happening by chance or luck but is part of the greater plan of redemption that is being guided and unfolded by the Creator, Redeemer and King... and what will truly happen at the return of the King. Great stuff...no wonder so many have loved these works for so many years. I am glad that I have finally read them especially this one **The Hobbit** for they are truly a blessing.

58. **The Art of Divine Contentment** by Thomas Watson (17th Century). “*Contentment is a divine thing. It becomes ours, not by acquisition...but as a gift from God.*” This little book is a real gem and is full beyond its size. It is a full exposition on Philippians 4:11-13. What a joy and conviction to read this book. Thomas Watson, a 17th Century Puritan pastor, clearly provides excellent instruction on Biblical passages dealing with our need for gratitude to our Heavenly Father, thus the result of contentment. A true pastor, speaking to a prevalent need of the day...and today for that matter, with so many thinking they are somehow entitled to more than they have thus leading to discontentment... each of the chapters are written so that the book could easily be used by a group for study or for an individual for devotional work. The importance of thanksgiving to God cannot be stressed enough. If one is properly viewing the works of God, then all things will be a cause for gratitude. Watson suggests the sin of our first parents was actually a discontentment and ingratitude to God. They wanted more rather than rejoicing in the bounty that had been provided. How often is that the case for each of us? He then suggests all sins stem from this ingratitude. Although the book is brief, there is much to ponder for years to come. This book ranks right up there with Jeremiah Burroughs’s book **The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment**.

59. **ALL THINGS FOR GOOD**, by Thomas Watson. This little booklet is an exposition of Romans 8:28 in a way that I have never seen it explicated. Do you need encouraging in times of difficulty? This book is for you. Do you need strengthening in your walk with the LORD? This book is for you. Do you need help in everyday living? This book is for you. This book in fact brings to every person great encouragement. How does the LORD make sin and evil and persecution, and life and death and every other thing work together for good? This little book explains how so simply and gently that you just want to dance and sing for joy. Watson is so quotable as well, like, “*If we are doubting Christians we are wavering Christians*”, or how about, “*Those who are monuments of mercy should be trumpets of praise!*” His whole purpose is to see how God does in fact comfort His people helping us all to be able to rest in the One who provides for such comfort. Just so you know: Most of these like the above title along with **The Art of Divine Contentment** and **The Bruised Reed** (also above) are free eBooks from Monergism.com. in fact, there are many of these “small” (100 to 200 paged) booklets for your reading and meditating purposes. They are so encouraging, because they deal with subject matter that very few will today because concern from within and without the ranks of the church.

60. **ON BEING A THEOLOGIAN OF THE CROSS: REFLECTIONS ON LUTHER'S HEIDELBERG DISPUTATION, 1518**, by Gerhard O. Forde (1997). I not been aware of Luther's Heidelberg Disputation which basically places his theology front and center in opposition to all those theologians of glory...those who cry, "Peace, Peace, when there is no peace!" Theologians of glory whether in Luther's day or in ours are those theologians in name only but not in true for they believe and teach that man is basically good, that man has a free-will and can whenever he chooses choose God and be saved, that man is the agent of his own salvation...the standard fare of blasphemous statements that have surrounded the Church since the Fall. "Did God really say...?" seems to be the driving statement in these cases...but in this "commentary" on the disputation it is the standard biblical positions that stand in opposition to the positions that man chooses to "live" by if that is truly living. There are 28 theses in the disputation like Thesis #13, *"Free will, after the Fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do it commits a mortal sin"*.... or Thesis #21- *"A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls a thing what it actually is."* A good read but perhaps even a better read would be Luther's words and his own commentary.

61. **THE SHADOW AND NIGHT** by Chris Walley (2004). What is it about English and Welsh writers like J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and now Chris Walley? This is of course, the first book of a trilogy called **The Lamb Among the Stars** series. These three author astutely capture creation, the Fall, redemption so well in fantasy form.(A genre I never cared much for...Science Fiction sure...as long as it was entertaining...but fantasy, never...especially fantasy that makes you think....as this book does). This fantasy has the Rebellion with evil being fought and won 10's of thousands of years before this world ever came to being and with the King's blessing...the Lord of Creation...mankind set out to spread THE SEED of the King throughout the universe. But something has gone wrong. These people have lived with the peace of God for thousands of years and now things are changing...the darkness of old has returned. The author captures extremely well the subtleness and the overtiness of evil...how attitudes change...how unity is pressed to the breaking point ...how we can so easily justify actions we would have never thought justifiable...even to killing and another life. Extraordinarily, stimulating and at the same time humbling for what I do not even see as sin. This work is very much like Tolkien's The Silmarillion... and is highly recommended by me. The darkness has returned or did it truly ever leave?

62. **THE DARK FOUNDATIONS** by Chris Walley (2006). #2 of the 3 part series entitled **The Lamb Among the Stars**. The evil has returned with a vengeance. The subtlety of evil has been spreading out throughout Farholme but now the real thing has come and reared its ugly head. The Lord-Emperor Nezhuala of the Dominion has vowed to unify the worlds thus destroying the Assembly of the Lamb and Commander Merril D'Avanos

is resting preparing for the next wave of attack. I liked this explanation from a teenage girl when she comes to realize the power of sin, *“I think...I think it is like an invisible fungus...an evil slimy fungus that sneaks into your life...and it has spores...we did spores in school last month...and they spread and hatch. And it makes you stop praying, takes your eyes off Jesus and makes you want to do what’s wrong... Actually that’s not right. It doesn’t make you. **You** do the wrong things. It’s a thing that just encourages you to do wrong. It whispers in your ear and you listen.”* This author captures the internal battle very well as well as the actual battles with the forces of the Lord- Emperor where at least at this point the forces of the Lamb have beaten them back...or have they? As this book ends we find Commander D’Avanos preparing for the final battle.

63. **THE INFINITE DAY** by Chris Walley (2008). 3 of 3 in **The Lamb Among the Stars Trilogy**. It’s over! Say it ain’t so!!! The 2nd book ends with the Commander and his cohorts planning to go after the kidnapped ambassadors from Farholme. This book picks up that story line and guess what?...They are able to get them all and return with a Dominion ship. How did they do that, you ask? You will have to read the books for yourself. ;) Anyway there is much to commend in this book especially once again concerning the encroachment of sin back into a people who had virtually forgotten what sin was...but while this book is long (576 pages) the author chooses to short change us on details and many places leaving the reader with the feeling of rushing toward a predictable ending. In fact, I would say that the last 3rd of the book was basically uneventful...he tied up rivalries and threatening situations too quickly and too neatly. And given what the ending is about there is simply a plethora of material that he could have used to bolster his ending to a greater climax. The work is compared to the works of C.S. Lewis (**A Space Trilogy**) and Tolkien (**Lord of the Rings**),but I would put it in the class and style of a more contemporary author like J.K. Rowling and her **Harry Potter series**. Having said all of this, I would recommend the trilogy for good vacation uninterrupted reading.
64. **The Expository Genius of John Calvin**, by Steven Lawson (2007). Another installment in the series **A Long Line of Godly Men** that Steven Lawson began some time ago to reinforce and reintroduce, in some cases, men of faith that God has used mightily through time. This is perhaps among the best, if not the best, short (148 pages) history of John Calvin’s devotion to God and God’s Word in writing today. It comes from Ligonier as a free eBook and I didn’t look until today to see when it was written and published. It is worthy of a download and a read, especially if you are in the pastoral ministry or pursuing it or even wondering if you should be pursuing it. It gives all the reasons for expository preaching over every other style. This is not to say that an occasional topical sermon can’t be thrown in, but the point of this book shows that Calvin knew his flock well and he knew of their greatest need since they were biblically illiterate and as such, in need of the Word preached purely and systematically so they could know the whole counsel of God. This is a timely book for today’s preacher since most of the people in

the pew or chair are biblically illiterate and have the same need to have the Bible preached purely and systematically. When the student of homiletics thinks of books that can inspire and direct the young and old preacher, this “biography” ought to be counted among them.

65. **NEARING HOME** by Billy Graham (2011). When I was given this to read I thought it would be his last book at 92 years of age. I like reading the “final” works of giants of the church. However, it turns out that at 96 he wrote another book, **Reason of My Hope: Salvation** (2013). Anyway this will probably be my last of his, in that this book kind of ties up all the dangling things of life and death. Always the perpetual evangelist his love for Scripture permeates the pages of this book. His matter of fact approach is refreshing and while this book is about ending well this Christian life...it is a book that young people who are seeking to grow well and then have as a by-product of maturity, leaving to go Home well...ought to read. It is short (180 pages) but full of wisdom from a man that has seen so many things in his nearly a century of living. As young people (put myself in here compared to him) we need to hear from our “elders” in the faith and this is one of those “last words” kind of books even though I think we will continue to hear from Billy until he is finally taken home to be with his beloved Savior and God.
66. **JOHN CALVIN: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine and Doxology**, edited by Burk Parsons with contributors like Sinclair Ferguson, Jerry Bridges, Steven Lawson and many others (2008). This book is a solid companion to a book that was written just before this one (spoken of above), **The Expository Genius of John Calvin**, by Steven Lawson (2007). John Calvin is a much maligned and misunderstood figure in church history mostly by those who haven’t taken the time to learn anything at all about how God used him. He was a reserved and cautious man except when he was in the pulpit and so he wouldn’t have liked so much fuss made over him and his accomplishments. His simple motto was: *Cor meum tibi offero, Domine, prompte et sincere*, “I offer my heart to you, Lord, promptly and sincerely.” The most important thing to Calvin was God’s glory for he understood for what purpose he was created. Each of the authors that contributed to this work highlight a particular aspect of John Calvin but as you read through this book they all seems to flow and mingle together since it is impossible to divorce one aspect of Calvin’s character with another even for study. Topics such as his humility, his heart, his preaching, his writing and his teachings on particular doctrines are highlighted in this book of 335 pages. A great read about a wonderful man of God.