

## 2018 Pastor's Reading List

**1. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE**, by Nathan Pitchford (2011). This is a great little book on the doctrines of grace (50 plus pages) that considers Unconditional Election, Total Depravity, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints...not from a theologian's perspective, but rather from a biblical scholar's perspective. There is very little theological explanation of these doctrines offered up on these serious doctrinal points. What is offered up is Scripture that supports each of these doctrines of grace. The first part of the book takes the particular doctrine and provides a biblical address for the reader to look up confirming this doctrine's accuracy and the second part is this expanded in that the biblical addresses and the full references are given. There are many helpful points to this little book but key among them is that by the time you finish this book you have transversed the entire Bible at least 5 times...a great exercise that solidifies these doctrines and our ability to articulate them from a biblical reference rather than just theologically phrased opinion. This little book is free from Monergism and ought to be on everyone's iPad or phone as a quick reference guide to these wonderful doctrines of grace.

**2. THE CASE FOR LIFE: EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS TO ENGAGE THE CULTURE**, by Scott Klusendorf (2009). I have read many books that seek to prepare the average Christian to engage their culture about this subject of paramount import, but this one rises above all the rest. It is extremely academic, in that it dissects the mind of the pro-abortionist extremely well from many different directions, but at the same time it is very practical in giving each person who reads this something they can walk away with and use from day one. He recommends many books at the end that everyone serious about this atrocity occurring in our world should have...but I will go out on a limb and say all you need is this one. He doesn't spend a lot of time "proving" the truth of the sanctity of life because he operates from a place of certainty in God and God's Word that makes this clear throughout its pages. The dignity of all human beings is found in the image of God and since the Bible and science support the fact that the unborn are human then everything the Bible says about life applies across the board to the born and the unborn...for all are human created in the image of God. It is a book that you can go to at any time for helpful information and we should. (it is less than 300 pages and very readable.)

**3. JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE**, by R.C. Sproul (2010). This is yet another of the small books (64 or so pages depending on your version) that were produced to share these doctrinal truths with the masses. This is perhaps the shortest and most easily read volume on this essential doctrine to the Christian faith. R.C. himself lays out irrefutable evidence against the Roman Catholic view and the antinomian view of justification. Specifically targeting the Roman Catholic view he even gives a handy chart at the end that shows the differences quickly and concisely. R.C. himself says at the end of this booklet, "*The differences between these two 'gospels' (the Roman catholic and the historical Protestant view) is in grave danger of being lost in our day. Efforts to heal the breach between Rome and the Reformation have yielded confusion among many. The issue cannot be resolved by studied ambiguities or different meanings attached to the same words. The crucial issue of infusion versus imputation remains the irreconcilable issue. We are either justified by a righteousness that is in us or by a righteousness that is apart from us. There is no third way.*" I cannot say it better so I won't. But everyone ought to read this little work.

4. **HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE**, by J.K. Rowling (1998). This was a free book from Kindle and as I was out of Kindle books to read I downloaded it and to my surprise I found it to be a fun read. It is not the literary masterpiece in the same vain as **The Lord of the Rings** but it masterfully written to draw a person in and keep them wanting more. It is a story of great courage, strength, loyalty, and sacrifice. Harry and his cohorts at great sacrifice to themselves are seeking to keep Hogwarts safe from unknown forces when they discover that Lord Voldemort a dark wizard/ spirt is behind the mischief leading towards an unknown nefarious purpose. I am a fan of the movies so it seemed fun to pick up this free book. I have found out some things that were left hanging in the movies that may answer the whole question as to why thing proceed as they do...specifically that Voldemort cannot be killed until or unless he takes on human form...but that is enough for now. Fun stuff and only 322 pages or so.

5. **NEVER LOOK AT THE EMPTY SEATS: A MEMOIR**, by Charlie Daniels (2017). This was a most interesting read to be sure. There is much in here to admire but especially the learning curve towards humility in his long life of entertainment. Charlie makes a great argument for working hard and following your heart...but all through the book he gives glory to God. His testimony of his faith is seen throughout but the chapters that speaks specifically to his faith are inspirational even if there are some doctrinal weaknesses. He is a man who has obviously sought to do his own thing in an industry that seeks to shape people into their mold. His wisdom is common sense wisdom that many people from his generation hold but very few actually share...Charlie doesn't hold back in this book. I wouldn't have picked this book up naturally but I am extremely glad that Leslie picked it up for me for I have grown as a person just by reading his testimony of a lifetime lived here in our midst in a culture complete foreign to me and yet we see a man who holds to the same faith (in most ways)) that I hold to. The title: **NEVER LOOK AT THE EMPTY SEATS** is what I have sought to believe through the years...the people who are there when you preach are the ones God means to be there (how many or how few) ...so proclaim as if your life...and their life... depends on it. Well worth the time.

6. **MY FINAL WORD: HOLDING TIGHT TO THE ISSUES THAT MATTER MOST**, by Charles W. Colson, Eric Metaxas, Anne Morse (2017). Chuck Colson's voice can still be heard in these memos and articles that never got around to be published since he wrote constantly based on this constant reading. Chuck Colson was a Christian man of the moment and true son of Issachar seeking to help the church to understand the times and our role in these times. If you have never read Chuck Colson before this would be a great overview of everything that he talked and wrote about for over 3 decades before his death. This book which has been put together by Anne Morse and forwarded by Eric Metaxas seeks to cover a wide variety of subjects from apologetics to bioethics to happiness to suffering and ending with a chapter devoted to the war of worldviews. This is a worthwhile read for anyone who wishes to get a good handle on the events of the day and what the church's role is to be in them. The subject matter is matter of fact and of such a grave nature... even if some of them are a few years old now...that everyone ought to read these and wrestle with them with Scripture to come to an answer for the good of the Church and the glory of God.

7. **HARRY POTTER AND CHAMBER OF SECRETS**, by J.K. Rowling (2000). (As I recover from surgery, I am enjoying reading this series.) Young Mr. Potter is growing into his

own, however... still struggling in his person, with Ron and Hermione teaching him about such things as Mudbloods and Squibs. Through all of this he is also trying to discover where the voices are coming from and when he finds out he comes face to face with his arch rival that he didn't know he had... saving the day once again. One of my favorite quotes so far, *"It only put me in Gryffindor," said Harry in a defeated voice, "because I asked not to go in Slytherin. . . .Exactly, said Dumbledore, beaming once more. Which makes you very different from Tom Riddle. It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities. Harry sat motionless in his chair, stunned."* This book was a slow read... the first was fun, but this took work to get through until you get to the last few chapters. All in all I push on to the Prisoner of Azkaban.

**8. HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN**, by J.K. Rowling (2001). I love how this book opens, *"Harry Potter was a highly unusual boy in many ways. For one thing, he hated the summer holidays more than any other time of year. For another, he really wanted to do his homework but was forced to do it in secret, in the dead of night. And he also happened to be a wizard."* Harry is learning a lot...the hard way...through extreme difficulty and trial...which is how most of us learn the lessons that matter...the ones that stay with us forever. Harry comes face to face with his past in this book and comes out wiser and stronger than ever before...and happier I might add. This book takes many twists and turns and keeps your attention from start to finish and your heart is warmed by its outcome. Dumbledore says to Harry near the end, *"You think the dead we have loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don't recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that particular Patronus? Prongs rode again last night."* As we end the book it sounds like it will be a pretty good holiday after all...

**9. HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE**, By J.K. Rowling (2002). Another turbulent but "fun" account of the on-going life of the young and maturing wizard Harry Potter. The antics of Ron, Hermione and him continue to explore the wizarding world revealing that there is a nefarious force alive and well in their midst. And then there is the Triwizard Tournament...aka the Quad-wizard Tournament. What fun...what intrigue...what sadness and along the way from beginning to the end life lessons abound from this book for Potter and his entourage, such as, *"If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals."*, along with revelations that will shake, sharpen and solidify the wizarding world at its core. Professor Dumbledore says *"I say to you all, once again—in the light of Lord Voldemort's return, we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. Lord Voldemort's gift for spreading discord and enmity is very great. We can fight it only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open."* Not to over spiritualize, but Christians would do well to remember this same thought concerning our fallen nature and the influence of Satan in these last days.

**10. CHRIST SET FORTH**, by Thomas Godwin (First published 1642...Monergism 2017). One of the things I love about the Puritans writings is that it is so contemporary in content...because while technology has advanced the weaknesses and sinfulness has not really changed through the ages. This text is written for the Christian who struggles with the truths of

the gospel that remind us of our weakness and Christ's superior strength. It was a great exposition of Romans 8:34 reminding us of what God the Father has done for us because we are NOT "good enough" to lean into ourselves...in fact when we seek to live by our heart we will suffer in our faith and walk in this life...because we do not read, meditate and speak of God's word to others we seek to look within ourselves for some supposed "inner strength" which isn't there. Rev. Godwin reminds his readers then, and us today, that we are to look to Christ not ourselves...God set forth Christ for that purpose. As Michael Horton says about this book, *"Turning to nearly any page in this volume, readers will be rewarded with a remarkably pastoral theology of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone."* For it is in the doctrines of Scripture that we will be able to experience the peace, hope and comfort that God the Father promises in Christ. (264 pages plus or minus) I found this on the Banner of Truth website concerning Rev. Godwin's early life: *"Thomas Goodwin was born in 1600 in the small village of Rollesby in Norfolk. His parents were God-fearing, and at that time the Norfolk Broads were well-soaked in Puritanism, so unsurprisingly he grew up somewhat religious. That all wore off, though, when he went up to Cambridge as a student. There he divided his time between 'making merry' and setting out to become a celebrity preacher. He wanted, he later said, to be known as one of 'the great wits' of the pulpit, for his 'master-lust' was the love of applause. 'He became a true man and servant of God...so somewhere along the way Christ got a hold of Him convincing him of the truths of Scripture that he wishes all Christians to hold on to.*

**11. THE GLORIOUS FEAST OF THE GOSPEL**, by Richard Sibbes (first published in 1650, digital form 2016). This is a series of sermon (9 in all) from Isaiah 25:6-9...where Isaiah prophesies about the Wedding Feast of the Lamb at the consummation. Believers of all ages are at one time or another out of communion with God because of our sin...because we are not as diligent in our study and worship...or simply because we suffer some grief or affliction where we "feel" separated from God. Like the work above Rev. Sibbes seeks to renew the believers understanding of who we are in Christ...what we have now and what we have to look forward to in eternity...the strength and size of God's love in Christ so that we can rise above the morass of this fallen world in which God has placed us. As I have said in the past Rev. Sibbes is perhaps the easiest of all Puritan preachers and writers to follow and understand. This work is only a little over 200 pages but well worth the believer's time especially if you like reading sermons.

**12. HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX**, J.K. Rowling (2004). Harry's days as a student at Hogwarts's School of Magic seem to be numbered. No one from the Ministry of Magic wants to listen to what he has to say...in fact, they want him out of the picture all together. When that fails...those around him that he trusts most seem to not want to listen him as well...so as usual he seeks to take matters into his own hands. In fact, the book is full of people taking things into their hands without regard for the consequences which leads at least in one case to a dire ending. As usual this book has a number of twists and turns that keeps their reader entertained and spellbound (pun intended). This book is almost 900 pages long but felt like the much smaller ones because of all the action and intrigue throughout.

**13. HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE**, by J.K. Rowling (2006). As Harry moves into his sixth year his power continues to grow...but is it enough? Even in the midst of a war that has spilled over into the non-wizarding world life goes on at Hogwarts where we find Harry struggling with himself...his temper and his falling for a particular red-headed

girl. Lord Voldemort is growing stronger as is Harry's relationship with Professor Dumbledore as they seek together to unravel Lord Voldemort's weaknesses if there are any. The professor gives Harry great encouragement when he says of Harry; *"You are protected, in short, by your ability to love!"* said Dumbledore loudly. *"The only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort's! In spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven, when you stared into a mirror that reflected your heart's desire, and it showed you only the way to thwart Lord Voldemort, and not immortality or riches."* And this as well when Harry gets discouraged; *"It was important, Dumbledore said, to fight, and fight again, and keep fighting, for only then could evil be kept at bay, though never quite eradicated. . ."* This is yet another long book (over 650 pages) but the action is seemingly non-stop for Harry, Ron and Hermione as they seek to discover the coming and goings of the usual culprits Malfoy, Snape and of course, Lord Voldemort. A Potions book and a new professor are a great distraction for Harry and the gang but the "fun" also comes with great tragedy as the book comes to an end...heading into the Deathly Hallows next.

**14. THE CROSSING, (The Last Cavaliers Series Book 1)** by Gilbert Morris (2011). I picked this up just before it went into our church library. I had forgotten how well Gilbert Morris writes his historical dramas. This particular book is a story about the life of Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson as told through the fictional character Yancy Tremayne. Yancy who is half Cheyenne and whose family are Amish...which adds to the whole drama of this story in so many wonderful ways as the two families...the Jackson's and the Tremayne's are intertwined before the Civil War and then after the conflict begins. Along the way Yancy finds himself as a man under the tutelage of 2 wonderful examples...his dad and Stonewall Jackson who begins as his professor at Virginia Military Institute and then his commanding officer during some of the bloodiest battles of the war. This has been one of those can't wait to pick it up again...now I must read the other 2. (approx. 360 plus pages in paperback)

**15. HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS**, by J.K. Rowling (2009). The heart of Book 7 is a hero's mission--not just in Harry's quest for the Horcruxes, but in his journey from boy to man--and Harry faces more danger than that found in all six books combined, from the direct threat of the Death Eaters and Lord Voldemort, to the subtle perils of losing faith in himself. It seems as this book sums up this whole story line that readers would do well to remember Dumbledore's warning about making the choice between *"what is right and what is easy,"* and know that Rowling applies the same difficult principle to the conclusion of her series. It is in this book that you will find the answers to hotly speculated questions about Dumbledore, Snape, and Lord Voldemort, but Rowling's skill as a storyteller is revealed in that even the most astute and careful reader will be taken by surprise. There is an interesting exchange of note between the main characters that really got me thinking, *"'But even if we wreck the thing it lives in," said Ron, "why can't the bit of soul in it just go and live in something else?" 'Because a Horcrux is the complete opposite of a human being', says Hermione. Seeing that Harry and Ron looked thoroughly confused, Hermione hurried on, 'Look, if I picked up a sword right now, Ron, and ran you through with it, I wouldn't damage your soul at all.'* *'Which would be a real comfort to me, I'm sure,' said Ron. Harry laughed. 'It should be, actually! But my point is that whatever happens to your body, your soul will survive, untouched,' said Hermione. 'But it's the other way round with a Horcrux. The fragment of soul inside it depends on its container, its*

*enchanted body, for survival. It can't exist without it. ' ' I am always interested by how fiction, as in this case, mirrors the truth.... for our body may die but our soul lives on. This book has been, as all the books, a fun read and enlightening as well...the themes that work best have always been creation, fall and restoration and they are evident throughout these books and especially this one. Another long book (almost 800 pages) but a page turner to be sure. Thank you K.K. Rowley for a good month of reading a classic story.*

**16. HOW SHALL I APPROACH GOD?**, by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889). This is an interesting little booklet (60 plus pages depending upon digital formatting) put together by Chapel Library Resources (Free Grace Broadcasters) for the edification of the church. It is made up of nine short messages, each from a different perspective, inviting those in the church to carefully consider the claims of God upon their lives. These were not originally sermons. Each short message was written specifically as a tract to command the attention of readers across time and cultures. It begins with these words, *"Crystal clear evangelism written for every man from nine perspectives."* ...and to that end here is an example of the clarity for which it speaks... *"There is but one work by which a man can be saved. That work is not thine, but the work of the Son of God. That work is finished—neither to be taken from nor added to—perfect through all ages—and presented by Himself to you, that you may avail yourself of it and be saved."*

**17. GOD'S WAY OF PEACE, A BOOK FOR THE ANXIOUS**, by Horatius Bonar (digital formatting by Monergism 2017). For those who are anxious about their faith this book goes a long way to give complete assurance for the anxious believer. This book was painstakingly preserved by a team of workers so that we today could receive the benefit of such God lead discussion on matters of the heart...like peace. It has been given to all who believe through the Holy Spirit but because of our stubbornness it is the hardest for us to experience in this life. This is yet another small book (75-100 pages depending upon the version you download) but it is filled with insight to help the true believer know where God's peace comes from. ***"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"*** (Rom. 5:1). The following quote comes from the 3rd chapter and it basically summarizes the rest of the book, *"We have seen that a sinner's peace cannot come from himself, nor from the knowledge of himself, nor from thinking about his own acts and feelings, nor from the consciousness of any amendment of his old self. Whence, then, is it to come? How does he get it? It can only come from God; and it is in knowing God that he gets it. God has written a volume for the purpose of making Himself known; and it is in this revelation of His character that the sinner is to find the rest that he is seeking."* Excellent little book for all of us of when we have a hard time experiencing God's peace.

**18. DOCTRINE OF GOD**, by John Dagg (1857). This is the 2nd book of a 3-book work entitled The Manual of Theology. This Southern Baptist preacher and teacher was a true Calvinist in the same vein of Charles Spurgeon and while his position on the sacraments, namely baptism, were not Reformed he led the charge in his church and in the classroom for a Reformed and Calvinistic approach to the Scriptures and to life. This section entitled the **Doctrine of God** very simply and yet profoundly informs the seeking student how to learn more about God in this very systematic approach. He begins this adapted booklet this way, *"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.'* (Dt 6:5). *In this manner the Bible commands the chief of all duties. No reasons are assigned for the*

requirement. No proof is adduced that God exists, or that he possesses such perfections as entitle him to the supreme love of his creatures. Jehovah steps forth before the subjects of his government, and issues his command. He waits for no formal introduction.” Monergism has formatted this into a digital form and offer it for free online. Not many Presbyterians know of John Dagg but he is perhaps as worthy of our time as Charles Spurgeon...this work is approximately 100 pages depending upon formatting.

**19. ANDREW JACKSON AND THE MIRACLE OF NEW ORLEANS: THE BATTLE THAT SHAPED AMERICA’S DESTINY**, by Brian Kilmeade with Don Yeager (2017).

Whether you are a fan of Andrew Jackson or not this is a book of history. Without the events that are so well spelled out in this book there might not be a United States today. As Great Britain sought to re-claim the Americas for the Crown, one man stood tall enough to rally the western part of the country to stop the aggression that would have surely destroyed this floundering country. Andrew Jackson’s determination in the face of great odds...not just from Great Britain but also from his own country and his own body enabled him with a lot of intervention from God Almighty to save this country at a time it most needed it. At a speech in Nashville after the battle Jackson said, *“The sons of America have given proof how impossible it is to conquer freemen fighting in defense of all that is dear to them. Henceforth we shall be respected by nations who, mistaking our character, had treated us with the utmost contumely and outrage. Years will continue to develop our inherent qualities, until, from being the youngest and the weakest, we shall become the most powerful nation in the universe”* (page 218). A very well written book and extremely riveting...another historical hit from Brian Kilmeade and Don Yeager... a read for everyone interested in true history.

**20. ALIVE OR DEAD?** by J.C. Ryle (1816-1900). This originally was part of a longer sermon on the subject of salvation. This section became an evangelistic tract...they obviously did things different back then...no pictures just meaningful words. (What a concept!) It asks a very simple question to its readers...Are you among the living or the dead? Rev. Ryle challenges the reader to consider his condition before His Maker. With some eloquent and thoughtful argumentation he sets the “score” before his readers both believer and non-believer. For the non-believer he asks, *“To everyone who is dead in sins I say this day—Why will you die? Are the wages of sin so sweet and good, that you cannot give them up? Is the world so satisfying that you cannot forsake it? Is the service of Satan so pleasant that you and he are never to be parted? Is heaven so poor a thing that it is not worth seeking? Is your soul of so little consequence, that it is not worth a struggle to have it saved? Oh, turn! turn before it be too late! God is not willing that you should perish.”* To the believer he challenges, *“Are you alive? Then see that you prove it by your actions. Be a consistent witness. Let your words, and works, and ways, and tempers all tell the same story. Let not your life be a poor torpid life, like that of a tortoise or a sloth—let it rather be an energetic stirring life, like that of a deer or bird.”* This pamphlet/tract, resurrected by Monergism and easily downloaded is a great reminder for both...for there is a time in the life of both for this type of retrospection, *“Are you dead, or are you alive?”*

**21. RAISING MEN: LESSONS NAVY SEALS LEARNED FROM THEIR TRAINING AND TAUGHT TO THEIR SONS**, by Eric Davis (2016). There are many father and son’s

truths here to be found in this book...some as old as time...but told from the perspective of one who was a member of the elite SEAL Teams. This book challenges men to be men with chapter

titles such as Building a team, lead from the front, hesitation kills, don't be right. Be effective, the only easy day was yesterday...the challenge becomes obvious. He is speaking directly to men who would rather have a molar taken out without painkillers than to be the father that they have been called to be. This is an extremely "manly" book to be sure. But it is too heavily laced with the language that military personnel use to intimidate, humiliate and communicate...so many curse words with an inappropriate use of one word in particular for me to recommend this book to anyone except a Jarhead, a Ranger or a SEAL. It would seem to me given the amount of intelligence that these men have and this one in particular that this language would not have to govern the books content. I wonder if he would want his daughter to pick this book up and read it...if so I would then have to question everything that he has written...for this kind of language is never appropriate for our women or our girls. Not appropriate as a tool for raising our boys as well. Call me a prude if you like...but he makes some great points concerning responsibility, accountability and a family being a team that needs one another but these are often colored by his continual use of a word that I find unnecessary. Military...I get it...but in my humble opinion he has a lot to say and a very limited audience. Actually I would conclude that this book is more about SEAL training than about raising men ...which was his topic for the book.

**22. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST**, by William Reid (1861). Rev. Reid was a Presbyterian minister who served with the Free Church of Scotland for many years before stepping over into the Brethren Church...an interesting move concerning the doctrine that he espouses in this treatise (100 plus pages) so clearly is biblical and Reformed. He speaks both the believers and non-believers in this treatise...to believer he speaks to our continual self-evaluation concerning what is actually influencing our worldview. He says many extremely helpful things but here are a couple, *"You may hold a sound creed with a proud, unbroken heart—and be more deeply damned on that very account. But if you wish to know God in all the glory of His being and attributes, you must grasp the manifestation of that glory as it is embodied and manifested in the Person of Jesus Christ."* And this: *"As well in our winters as our summers, the foundation standeth sure: 'Christ is all.' With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (Jam 1:17). Precious truth! Let us rest upon it, and cease from the vain endeavor to find anything in us that can give the shadow of hope. Abiding hope must be fixed on the object that changeth not. We change daily, hourly; He remains glorious in holiness eternally."* To non-believers he has these questions and comments; *"What must I do to be saved? What is the true ground of a sinner's peace with God? What am I to believe in order to be saved?"* Well, in so far as laying the foundation of your reconciliation is concerned, I wish you to observe that you have nothing to do; for the Almighty Surety of sinners said on Calvary, *"It is finished"* (Joh 19:30). Jesus has done all that the Holy Jehovah deemed necessary to be done to insure complete pardon, acceptance, and salvation to all who believe in His name." This is a great treatise to read and re-read...thankfully it has been reprinted and placed online for free so we can do just that. You can find this at [www.chapellibrary.org](http://www.chapellibrary.org).

**23. THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE, OR, A BREIF SUM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, CONTAINED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND HOLDEN FORTH IN THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS; TOGETHER WITH THE PRACTICAL USE OF IT**, by David Dickson and James Durham. (They really knew how to make a title roll off the lips, don't you think?) Originally was written and given the simple title **The Sum of Saving Knowledge**, as a refutation of Arminianism in 1650 while the 2



of them were also working of the 'Directory of Public Worship' for the Presbyterians in Scotland in the Free Church of Scotland. This work is a point counterpoint not so much of refutation but of encouragement so that that man and woman of God may be assured of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It came to be attached to the documents of the WCF after their death though it was never given full general assembly compliance. The copy I am reading from Monergism.com is approx. 148 pages and was printed first in 1727, then again in 1871...and then again by the university of Edinburgh where Dickson had held the chair in Church History in 116 and then now digitally reworked for download in 2014 as far as I can tell. This is an exceptional read. The authors say, "*The sum of the gospel, or Covenant of Grace and reconciliation, is this: 'If you flee from deserved wrath to the true Redeemer Jesus Christ (who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through him), you shall not perish, but have eternal life'*". Rom. 10.8, 9, 11. A great reminder in this day and age of easy believeism...since fleeing takes a lot of work given our nature to flee towards the wrong rather than the right. One of the best summaries of saving faith, the Christian walk and the benefits of this faith written in such a short form.

**24. D-DAY THROUGH GERMAN EYES: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS BY GERMAN SOLDIERS OF JUNE 6, 1944**, by Holger Eckhertz (2015). This is a grandson honoring the work of his grandfather Dieter Eckhertz who in 1944 was a military journalist for the German Army...writing many articles of interest, many of which were propaganda pieces on behalf of the 3rd Reich. Herr Eckhertz left the service after the war but he still had one more project in him to complete which was a series of interviews with various German soldiers and officers who had fought in Normandy on that eventful day of June 6, 1944...the day the Allies knew as "D-Day". The reason for this project was that he had spoken to many of these men before D-Day because of how formidable the fortification was along the coast...but now 10 years later...in 1954...he sought these same men out to talk about that day. However, the project was still in progress when Herr Eckhertz died in 1955 and was never completed until his grandson picked it up and completed the interviews with those men who were still alive that were willing to talk about that day. Given Germany's hesitation in bringing up details concerning the 3rd Reich not much time was spent in writing about the war especially from the perspective of the German soldier. In this book and the next one **D-Day Through German Eyes Book 2**...he carries out his grandfather's desire and reveals things from the German perspective that I was unaware of...things that I think many would not know except the most astute followers of WWII history... which makes this first book fascinating to be sure. One thing stands out to me throughout this book which was a shocker...and it revolves around the reason that so many German soldiers fought so fiercely on the Western front especially at Normandy. (It's not what you think.) You will have to read it to discover what I am talking about. Just one tidbit of details...can't not say something... One German prisoner on the beach that day asked an American soldier, "Where are all your horses?"

**25. D-DAY THROUGH GERMAN EYES: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS BY GERMAN SOLDIERS OF JUNE 6, 1944, BOOK 2**, by Holger Eckhertz (2015). This is a continuation of the interviews that his grandfather had had with men who fought in Normandy on that fateful day from the German side of things. Many of the same realities that I alluded to in the first critique are true of this one...many of the things that I had never heard or read before about June 6, 1944 are spoken of here as well with a few more details...admissions and declarations that the first book didn't have. Also, in this book, of all the interviews, we see one of the men who realized the atrocities of the 3rd Reich even though it came 10 years after the war. We see many proud

military men doing their duty because they really didn't have any other option...though the propaganda machine at the time had convinced them of their duty to a "united Europe" which was anything but the truth. Once again these interviews were expertly done revealing things that even the interviewer didn't expect sometimes. Good reporting and good writing.

**26. ASCENSION**, from Free Grace Broadcaster Issue #243 (2018). Another digital booklet (75-100 pages depending upon formatting) covering this often not discussed topic of Christ's ascension. We spend much time, as we should, on the truth of the Cross and the Resurrection and not enough on the Ascension of Christ as they did in previous generations as displayed from these works from Charles Spurgeon, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Isaac Ambrose, William Swan Plumer, John Gill, A.W. Pink, Jonathan Edwards, and John Flavel. Previous generations seemed to preach more on the full counsel of God than we do today. I am constantly made of this being the case when talking to people who simply do not remember sermons or teaching on such a subject as the ascension of Christ. It is sad for the Church today to not be exposed to the full council of God. Good expository preaching, which is also disappearing today, demands that we cover each of these topics/doctrines that Scripture teaches. The subjects that are dealt with in these booklets are extremely informative and encouraging for God's church...and they are FREE on line at [www.chapellibrary.org](http://www.chapellibrary.org). If you are at all interested in "listening" to a long line of godly men speak here is an excellent resource for the church.

**27. THE AFFECTIONATE THEOLOGY OF RICHARD SIBBES**, by Mark Dever (2018). This book continues the series called The Long Line of Godly Men from reformation Trust Publishing. This book is adapted from Mark E. Dever's, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*, his doctoral dissertation and much of it, even in this form, reads that way. But if like me, you are interested in these men who affected to Church in a powerful way...you can look past this short coming in writing style. I am and have been a great fan of Richard Sibbes - his writings and his sermons through the years - who very much like others through the years have remained in the Church of England, and by God's grace, were able to preach a thoroughly Reformed/biblical message without compromise. Mark Dever gives us a truly informative book on this man who seems to be the J.I. Packer or John Stott of his day. Dever says of Sibbes, *"Sibbes' loyalty to the Church of England was also consistent with his theology. He understood the church to be a covenant community far more extensive than the elect, intended to be filled with people in various spiritual states. Therefore, imperfection was expected and tolerated—though not excused—and the use of means vigorously encouraged. Indeed, the covenant obliged one to live a life of holiness. Sibbes' interiorization of piety—not unique to him, but powerfully communicated in his sermons—accounts for his popularity with disparate groups, for his ability to conform to the demands of the church, and also for the potential for a Christianity lived in disobedience to ungodly earthly authorities."* And towards the end Dever says of Sibbes, *"Not that Sibbes was a moderate man when preaching of the necessity of justification by faith, the certainty of God's salvation of the elect, or the duty of all members of the covenant to fulfill their obligations. His moderation was reserved for those externals of religion, which he deemed matters of indifference and which his church deemed edifying—the sign of the cross, the use of clerical garments, and perhaps even an unworthy recipient of a fellowship. Even in his last years when he must have felt most circumscribed and could have most easily despaired, he remained a member of "the sacred communion of the truly Evangelical Church of England."*

**28. JOKER ONE: A MARINE PLATOON'S STORY OF COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, AND BROTHERHOOD**, by Donovan Campbell (2009). This is an excellent and riveting read. It was definitely another one of those that was hard to put down. This book is the story of Lt. Donovan Campbell and his platoon Joker One and their deployment together in Ramadi, Iraq in 2004. It is excellent because his writing style draws the reader into his mix of characters and a story that is real. As with so many others of these...stories that need to be told because the men do not feel as if they can tell it. This book is about how all these men from their platoon commander down to the lowest grunt learned and grew together. Lt. Campbell talks of his inadequacies concerning His leadership which actually sprang from his inadequate relationship with his Lord and Savior. He says at one point: *"What I know now, and which didn't occur to me then, was that by praying as I prayed, and hoping what I hoped, and believing what I believed, I was effectively reducing God to a result-dispensing genie who, if just fed the proper incantations, would give the sincere petitioner (me) the exact outcome desired."* His new wife was used by God as well. When he was getting all puffed up with himself and the "luck" of his platoon, she said, *"She was glad that no one was hurt, she said, but she reminded me that God wasn't a cosmic slot machine that came up sevens every time for the pious believer. He doesn't guarantee us health and prosperity, or even safety for your men in this life, she told me. All He guarantees you is your relationship with Him in the next. They were hard words of truth, to be sure, but ones spoken in love."* You don't often hear a Marine talk like this but this was to be part of his growth...his leadership and the brotherhood that grew from that was all based on the growth of his faith in a place so far away from the faith he knew and it was just what he needed. By the end of it all this is how he came to see his role: *"It was constantly teaching my men, sharing everything with them until I had nothing left to give, with the expectation and the hope that they would become greater than me. It was making myself less so that they might become more."* This book came highly recommended by Chick Colson and as a lesser voice I include my endorsement.

**29. CHURCH DISCIPLINE**, by various writers, from Free Grace Broadcaster Issue #122 (2012). The authors in this issue R. Albert Mohler, Jr, James Bannermann, John Gill, Daniel E. Wray, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon all have one thing in common...they believe in Church Discipline and the 3rd strand in defining a true biblical church, though many come from a decidedly baptistic/Congregational position on church polity. I say this because most of them leave out the authority and leadership of the elder to hold the sinner responsible as they like the priest represent Gods people. Yet, they are very clear as to Church Discipline's purpose of restoration and to its need to keep the Church pure/holy as intended by God from the beginning. As stated by Dr. Mohler, *"Jesus instructed the disciples that anger against a brother is a deadly sin. Reconciliation is a mandate, not a hypothetical goal."* Jonathan Edwards here is the only truly Reformed voice in this booklet.... but then he literally "wrote the book" on church discipline! Having said that...these voices are strong and edifying on a subject that doesn't get much to any play in today's church. So, this is yet another booklet that ought to be read by church leaders and members alike.

**30. HOW TO BE A PERFECT CHRISTIAN: YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO FLAWLESS SPIRITUAL LIVING**, from the Babylon Bee folks (2018). This is a perfect book for those who seek after the elusive "perfection" badge from God in this life. For those who desire to be better than anyone else in the Church... this is truly the place to go and it doesn't

cost much either to buy this book and that is a good thing since anything worth having shouldn't require much or any sacrifice. This is a step by step guide because we know how important steps are in getting where you want to go. You will be very pleased as you work your way to Christ likeness using this time-honored material so meticulously put together for those who earnestly seek it. This is right up there with Scripture and those Confessions that only the stuffy Spirit-filled Christians really consider. Those take too much work and the average perfection seeker is not looking to work...not looking to lift a finger at all. How to do this is covered exclusively only, here in this book. But wait, there is a special bonus given for measuring how you are doing as you go through this time honored and time proven methodology...the HOLINESS PROGRESS TRACKER 5000. I'm not kidding...this handy-dandy tool helps to keep you focused on the goal of perfection. What a great idea! To you be all the glory! (Really it is just a bunch of satire meant to get you thinking about what is really important to you. I wouldn't give this book to just anyone anymore...people don't get satire because this is exactly what many people think is real.)

**31. THE BLESSINGS OF HUMILITY**, by Jerry Bridges (2016). This was probably Dr. Bridges last book before his home going and this subject of humility was always on his mind as he wrote about it many times in his other books but not as exclusively as he does in this one. As he says in the introduction...as a people often we admire humble people when we see them...but we are always left with the question of how do we practice humility when it is so obviously not something that comes naturally? But then that is the point of most of his books...along with the point that Bible drives home...short of God's grace we cannot do anything "good" that would glorify God. So he sets about the task of telling us how, by God's grace we can actually practice humility and receive the blessings of God at the same time. He takes each Beatitude and clearly explains how they apply to redeemed people and how they reveal humility when we practice them. The Bible presents us with a formidable list, one that none of us will ever perfectly attain to. That is why we need the gospel every day. It is the gospel that will keep us from becoming discouraged and will instead motivate us to keep pursuing humility, even when we fail so often. It is clear throughout that we cannot and will not walk in humility unless we are continually appropriating more and more of the gospel into our daily thinking and actions. His suggestion for appropriating the gospel is an easy one...meditating and praying over key texts from the Bible that we choose ...that have been and are meaningful to us. Well, that is a place to start...I too, would suggest journaling through the Scriptures...writing them out and praying over them enables us to see and hear God speak to us.

**32. DEVOTED TO GOD: BLUEPRINTS FOR SANCTIFICATION**, by Sinclair Ferguson (2016). Looking at specific scriptures throughout the New Testament Dr. Ferguson shows us the truth of this doctrine, its importance and the comfort and hope that comes when Christians understand what God is doing to us for His glory and for ours. This is a simple approach to a "simple" doctrine of God's grace for His people. This is such a helpful tool and ought to be in everyone's theological toolbox; a toolbox that would also include **The Holiness of God** by R. C. Sproul, **The Pursuit of Holiness** by Jerry Bridge, **The Quest for Godliness** by J. I. Packer and **Holiness** by J C Ryle. This is true because his intention is to provide as clear a teaching on holiness as he can. There has been much written throughout the centuries on this subject but this volume captures this doctrine in a way that anyone, from scholar to lay person might be blessed. For he really lets the Bible do the talking here hence the word "blueprints"... for it is God who

gives and explains this doctrine best. at one point he is expositing Romans 6 to make his point and his clear thought goes something like this when referring to the text, *"Paul is NOT saying that sin has been destroyed...Paul is NOT saying the we no longer experience the influence and impact of our past life in Adam...Paul is NOT saying sin's presence has been eradicated in our lives...BUT he IS saying that we are no longer citizens of the kingdom in which sin reigns. We are no longer its slaves or its subjects."* The answer to our dilemma with sanctification is this; we are to believe and trust in God's promises, keep running towards Jesus and at the same time deal with the sin in our lives...that hangs on. Great book ...highly recommend this...just under 300 pages.

### **33. PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE: BIBLICAL GUIDANCE FROM THE PURITANS,**

by James A. La Belle and Joel Beeke (2016). Wow, there is a lot jammed into a small booklet here. This booklet is the reprinting of a chapter from the book **LIVING IN A GODLY MARRIAGE**, by La Belle and Beeke from reformation Heritage Books. It is about hearing the voices of Puritan pastors giving advice to young people about the divine ordinance of marriage. These voices focus on how to prepare yourself for marriage, how to seek a spouse, and how to find an appropriate spouse... all of it based in the seekers faith with God and the potential spouse's faith in God. The reason this book would be so helpful today is that we live in such a day where people are rejecting God's Word out of hand...even Christians...and they seek to do things on their own. And when it comes to marriage, if we marry at all, we make it up as we go. The Bible is clear about how important Godly counselors are in our lives...so here before us is a little booklet that brings these godly counselors, probably many that you have never heard before...because they were simply faithful pastors of their flocks. This is free download for iBook's from [www.chaplelibrary.org](http://www.chaplelibrary.org).

**34. TRUSTING GOD,** by Jerry Bridges (1998 and reprinted with study guide in 2008). This is a book that all believers need to read because we have gotten off course with trusting God. I concur with his theory concerning Christians today when he says, *"I read a blasphemous statement by someone who said, 'Chance is the pseudonym God uses when He'd rather not sign His own name.' A lot of Christians are doing that for God today. Often unwilling to accept the fact that God is working because they don't understand how He is working, they have chosen to substitute the doctrine of chance for the doctrine of divine providence."* In other words, we don't trust God because in our minds He hasn't "let us in on what He is doing." But as he goes on to say, *"Our lives are also cluttered with a lot of 'if onlys.' 'If only I had done this,' or 'if only that had not happened.' But again, God has no 'if onlys.' God never makes a mistake; God has no regrets. 'As for God, His way is perfect' (Psalm 18: 30). We can trust God. He is trustworthy."* And we would know that if we truly believed in His sovereignty as Christians. Our trust in God ought to reflect this singular truth; God will never allow any action against you that is not in accord with His will for you. And His will is always directed towards our good (Romans 8:28-29). This is a great reminder of what we too easily forget about when we name the name of Christ. Pick it up and enjoy. (360 pages)

**35. MAN OVERBOARD: The Story of Jonah,** by Sinclair Ferguson (2008). Why do we so often stay away from this book...an Old Testament Prodigal Son account? But the book of Jonah is so much more than that. Jonah is us! Perhaps that is why we stay away from this book...or maybe it is because it is part of that collection of books called the Minor Prophets and those guys

only talked judgment to Israel and Judah, right? Wrong! This is perhaps the best little book I have ever read on Jonah (approx. 100 pages) I first became fascinated with this book years ago when I first read the classic **Moby Dick**. In chapter 9 of that book you read a blistering sermon on the book of Jonah by a retired sea captain turned chaplain/ minister in port to mariners and their families. It was such a rousing sermon even for a non-Christian at the time that I had to look up the book. I was even more moved and delighted when I saw how short it was and having heard for years about the great whale that swallowed Jonah I quickly realized that this story was not about the fish. And that is what Dr. Ferguson makes clear as well...it is not about the fish...it is about God's grace through and through. This is an easily readable and highly effective book into the nature of God...both the Book of Jonah and Dr. Ferguson's book **MAN**

### **OVERBOARD: The Story of Jonah.**

**36. JONAH: His Life, Character and Mission**, Patrick Fairbairn (1849). Fairbairn was a Free Church of Scotland minister and theologian. Of this book Charles Spurgeon said, *"The life and times of the prophet are set in a clear light; and the nature and design of his mission fully explained. The work is well done, and is by far the ablest English treatise on this subject."* It is certainly a thorough commentary of a short book...at just under 200 pages it seems that every possible avenue of Jonah's is considered which is good when you consider that he shows over and over again the connection between the prophet and the Messiah. I read this book at the same time I was reading **Man Overboard** (see above) and found while the first was more easily read this one is the most scholarly of the works. Fairbairn extensively deals with the "change" in Jonah's heart and he easily equates it to us in so many ways. Here a couple of "short" quotes that I hope will suffice to show this, *"So that we may certainly conclude of affliction generally, if it drives the heart from its idols, if it breaks the spirit of self-sufficiency, if it brings a man to his knees, it is an affliction sanctified for his spiritual good."* And the second, *"Faith is always, in proportion to its clearness and strength, fertile in resources; it is of quick discernment in the fear of the Lord, and will often find grounds of confidence and rays of hope, where to the natural mind all seems enveloped in gloom and despondency."* This is an oldie...but most certainly a goodie. There are many good sources out there on the Minor Prophets to be sure but this treatise by this Scottish scholar on this book far exceeds them all in my opinion.

**37. MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH**, by R.C. Sproul (2018 published post humorously). This is the product of reworking one of his popular audio/video series into a book. This is a book for anyone and everyone who wishes to be reminded of who God is and why we worship Him. In this book we see one of the best... if not the best proof for the existence of God as R.C. gives careful explanation of God's name *"I am who I am."* These 2 quotes communicate the books worth for the Christian well, (1) *"...a Christian's reverence for God doesn't rise to true worship until that Christian worships God not for what He has done but for who He is in His transcendent majesty."*(2) *"When we use the word transcendent with respect to God, we are not referring to geography, to where God lives. If God is self-existent, eternal, and pure, then He is, by definition, transcendent. He's a higher order of being. It is for that reason that God calls Himself "I AM." When we consider the transcendence and aseity of our God, we will respond in worship and awe—just as Moses did at the burning bush."* Helping others know God was one of R.C.'s missions in life and this little book is one of the best examples of his desire being fulfilled.

**38. THE MOMENT OF TRUTH**, by Steven J. Lawson (2018). This book was commissioned by R.C. Sproul himself after listening to Dr. Lawson give a conference talk on this subject of God's Truth. The basic premise of this book is this; *"The rejection of truth is where sin began, and it continues to this very day."* **The Moment of Truth** is that moment when we become convinced by the Holy Spirit of the truthfulness of God's Word and we begin living by it becomes we have become convinced of its truthfulness. In fact all people have a moment of truth...whether they are called to receive it or to reject it...but everyone has a moment of truth where the truth hits them between the eyes and how they react then tell you who is changed and who remains the same. Why another book on the truth besides the Bible...because we continue to live in times where truth is constantly under fire from outside and even from within the Church. He wraps his whole book around these 8 truth truths concerning the truth: it is divine, absolute, objective, singular, immutable, authoritative, powerful and determinative. The truth is so essential and non-negotiable that we need to constantly be engaged in this conversation. He makes this claim to support my afore mentioned presupposition, *"The accuracy and authority of Scripture have existed at the heart of most major Christian controversies. The frontline battle in the church will always be over the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture."* This is a necessary book for all church elders to read in preparation for the battle at hand.

**39. PASTORAL SKETCHES**, by J.C. Philpot (1802-1869). At first he pastored within the Church of England but eventually resigned to be re-baptized and received into the Strict & Particular Baptist Church, where he came to be called "the Seceder." He was known for his penetrating messages, practical preaching, and exaltation of the grace of Jesus Christ. These are some interesting small biographies of some men that many of us are well aware of like John Bunyan, Martin Luther, John Calvin, George Whitefield and Samuel Rutherford. In fact, I will say that concerning all but Samuel Rutherford the short biographies are to be placed among the best I have ever read. Concerning Rutherford he spoke of his eloquence and his inspiring letters but this was the shortest (3 pages) of all the men that he had chosen to right about. The others: William Tiptaft, William Gadsby, John Warburton, John Grace, William Huntington, John Gill, and George Isbell are all men who for the most part started out their ministerial careers in the Church of England but within a few short years grabbed a hold of Calvinism in a big way...preaching and teaching the doctrines of grace until their dying breaths. Now of these men most were what was called Strict and Particular (particular redemption) Baptist who held to a Calvinistic soteriology but a congregational form of church polity. These were often lumped together with the Reformed Baptist but the difference between the 2 boiled down to one or 2 differences. The Reformed Baptists usually practiced a Presbyterian form of polity and the Lord's Supper could be open to believers from other Reformed Churches...whereas the Strict Baptist are called Strict or Particular because of a "closed" or strict communion...only those baptized in the local parish could take the Lord's Supper after a time of preparation. In our country we have the Primitive Baptists who are more or less like the Strict and particular Baptists with the exceptions; they do not adhere to any connection with parachurch organizations and they do not believe in Sunday School. Any way...his whole point...is that there are some people that shouldn't be forgotten. (Short book...less than 200 pages of great reading on godly men of God.)

**40. JESUS: PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING**, by J.C. Philpot (1802-1869). Why am I reading material by a Strict Baptist? Because it has been an interesting way to reflect on our current state

of the up and coming Reformed Baptists to see what they are keeping and what they are jettisoning from their history...if they even know their history...also...this guy is a good writer. To be honest this is one of the best defenses of the offices of Jesus that I have read. It is so easy to follow and readable for the lay person as well as the scholar...and that being the case, it will be easy to use one day...the next time I teach on this subject. And the best thing...it is all free through Monergism.com. As he looks at each of the offices of Christ he masterfully uses Scripture to prove each of his supportive points...points that are derived from Scripture as well. Since he holds to a very Calvinistic soteriology it is like reading from one of the Reformers or for that matter one of today's authors from a Reformed perspective. I am impressed with these writers of old especially in their own defense of their works. The following quotes comes at the end of this remarkable book. *"We cannot but feel how weakly, how imperfectly, we have treated these heavenly mysteries; but they have not been handled by us without some thought and care, as well as prayer for divine instruction for ourselves, and a spiritual blessing upon them for our readers. We have not written carelessly for careless readers; but while we have endeavored 'to hold fast the faithful word as we have been taught, so as to be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers,' we have also aimed so to blend experience with doctrine, and practice with experience, as to edify the living family of God. They will be both our best and most lenient judges, for as they, and they only, know the value and blessedness of the subjects which we have brought before them, so they, and they only, will throw a mantle of love over our imperfections."*

**41. TALES FROM THE RIVERSIDE**, by Larry Landgraf (2018). This is a local "author" who loves to tell his stories. In many ways this is Phil Robertson and the Duck Dynasty 2.0 without the Christian faith component that is so evident in the Robertson clan. In this book (he has others) he tells the tale of living in the swamp in Refugio County in the backwater of the San Antonio bay eating everything that doesn't eat him for the most part...even somethings that would if they had the chance first. There is nothing that really draws his reader in except the aspect of what it is like to live off the land and in one of the most inhospitable regions of Texas. He paints a fairly good picture of that to be sure and along the way he throws in a good dose of his philosophies about mankind, the government and Mother Nature...all things that he has little to no control over. But in the end his life philosophy is easily summed up in his own words, *"If you are not happy, it's your own fault."*

**42. A WARRIOR'S FAITH: NAVY SEAL RYAN JOB, A LIFE-CHANGING FIREFIGHT, AND THE BELIEF THAT TRANSFORMED HIS LIFE**, by Robert Vera (2015). This was an incredible story about an incredible man Ryan Job (pronounced just like Job of the Bible). This story re-counts the events that led to his near death on the battle field called the city of Ramadi, Iraq. His story touched so many people because it has been recounted by a number of his SEAL buddies in books like **American Sniper** by Chris Kyle and **Trident** by Jason Redman. Even after his recovery and having a lasting blindness as a result this book recounts a man with an unstoppable sense of humor and a fierce determination to not let his blindness slow him down. Since he was a man of the TEAMS after his recovery he surrounded himself with a new team that included the author as they ran marathons and scaled mountains together to encourage other wounded warriors in their trek back. His story needed to be told because he dies of a surgical complication way too soon also recounted in this book. His faith became foundational to his strength as he sought to tell others how they too can overcome the



horrors of war. Here are a couple of quotes from the book concerning Ryan: *"Many who accept Christianity have no clue that as soon as they do, they're enlisted in a conflict. A conflict that rages every second of every day. One that competes for our heart, mind, and soul. To fully live the Christian adventure, we have to turn off the TV, stop living in denial, and refuse to participate in the tit-for-tat, one-upmanship lifestyle that society demands we should engage. Christians are called to act differently from their past and differently in response to others."* And this about Ryan from the author, *"Ryan refused to be a victim, even on the roof after being shot. He insisted on walking on his own so his team members wouldn't have to put down their weapons to carry him. He declined to let blindness hold him back. And what was even more impressive was that he would not let his blindness be an excuse for anything short of excellence."* Ryan once told a TV reporter, *"Despite what your momma told you, violence does solve problems. Risking your life for the people you love is never a waste."* A great read about a warrior for Christ.

**43. MOBY DICK OR THE WHALE**, Herman Melville (1851). An interesting novel...sometimes history of whaling. Ishmael, the fictitious character narrates this "quest" ...obsession of his Captain, Ahab of the whaling ship Pequod of Nantucket. When we allow our obsessions to get the best of us... they always will....as is the case of Moby Dick, Ahab and his crew. I am of the opinion that this is one of the best books ever written, though at the time it of its original writing was not received well. Its importance in the study of whaling and of human behavior becomes important as the years went by. Two subjects thrust together for our study and entertainment. Its philosophy continues to ring true years later. When discussing the law of "Loose-Fish and Fast Fish" his thoughts concerning man in general show forth. *"What was Poland to the Czar? What Greece to the Turk? What India to England? What at last will Mexico be to the United States? All Loose-Fish. What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but Loose-Fish? What all men's minds and opinions but Loose-Fish? What is the principle of religious belief in them but a Loose-Fish? What to the ostentatious smuggling verbalists are the thoughts of thinkers but Loose-Fish? What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish? And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too?"* The book is written in the fashion of a poem or as it gets many of its literary devices from Shakespeare and the Bible ..it often reads like a well-orchestrated drama. The Bible plays a powerful role in the midst of this book...with the sermon of Father Mapple on Jonah (from Chapter 9) being one of the best that I have ever read. And his theology...well at least the theology of Ishmael comes clear as well, *"But all the things that God would have us do are hard for us to do—remember that—and hence, he oftener commands us than endeavors to persuade. And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists."* And one more, just for fun; *"In this world, shipmates, sin that pays its way can travel freely, and without a passport; whereas Virtue, if a pauper, is stopped at all frontiers"* (from the Sermon). Oh well, one more; *"For neither man nor angel can discern Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks Invisible, except to God alone."* A tremendous study of men is contained within these pages (approx. 710 or so depending upon the medium with which you read) ...and well worth the time... so take it slowly.

**44. THE GOSPEL COMES WITH A HOUSE KEY: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post- Christian World**, by Rosaria Butterfield (2018). In this book, Rosaria Butterfield brings us into her home just like she does so many of her church family and

neighbors who might never grace the doors of church so we can see the gospel in action and hear the word preached through watching a Christian “live by faith”. Almost on every page she speaks of the Radically Ordinary Hospitality that Christians are called to participate in. In an age of skepticism to everything that sounds like Scripture she shows us how her family “evangelizes” the “masses” in her neighborhood and church. She shows us how the love of Christ looks in the messiness of life. She reminds us of her own story in short and how it was an invitation to dinner that God used to begin the path to her own conversion to Christ and how this can work in our own lives if we are not looking for quick changes and response...but are in it ...gospel work... for the long haul. This is not a blueprint for how we will do this...but it is a call to do it that comes first from the pages of Scripture to us. I read this quote concerning this book, “Raw. Unvarnished. Personal. Real. These are some of the words which scrolled through my head as I put down Butterfield’s book.” For me, I would say that those and others like “totally transparent and gritty” struck me from each of her books that I have read. (Think **Openness Unhindered**) And I highly recommend the reading of her books...especially concerning how we are to live in 21st Century America as God has prescribed in the Bible.

**45. GOSPEL WORSHIP**, by Jeremiah Burroughs (1647). The content of this “tract” (300 plus pages) is made up of 14 sermons where Burroughs carefully, systematically and almost exhaustively explains the right way of worshiping God by referring to how the Christian is to respond to the hearing of the Word, the receiving of the Lord’s Supper and prayer. From Leviticus 10 he outlines the sins of God’s people that keep us from worshiping God “aright” and the ways in which by God’s grace we can in fact worship God aright which purpose is to move the believer closer to our Holy God. Yay! ... for the Puritans, and how they speak to us hundreds of years later, if we would but listen. *“The duties of God's worship must be full of strength, for they are not suitable to God else, because God is a God infinite in power and glory Himself, therefore God cannot endure vain worshipping. In Isa. 1:13. I hate vain oblations: Vanity of Spirit in worshipping of God is very hateful to God, it doth defile the Name of God. God is dishonored by the vanity of men's spirits. Now this strength is threefold: First, The strength of Intention. Secondly, The strength of Affection. Thirdly, the strength of all the faculties of the soul, and the strength of body too, as much as we are able should be put forth in the worshipping of God.”* Intentionality in our worship...actual affection/love for God in our worship...having fully prepared bodies and soul for worship...you see these are not novel or new ideas that are just now being espoused by the Church...they are being espoused again by the Puritans and we are just now “discovering them once again. The Puritans often remind us of what we have forgotten; Burroughs in no exception. He is “easy” to read...but there is packed within this amazing work an exhaustive amount of material that all who read it will find extremely helpful in our walk with God. This is an encouraging work and a convicting work...and it is free through Monergism.com.

**46. KEEPING PLACE: REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF HOME**, by Jen Pollock Michel, Scott Sauls (2017). This was a great book to read...especially reading while reading at the same time Rosaria Butterfield’s latest book **THE GOSPEL COMES WITH A HOUSE KEY**. Both of these authors do something that you won’t find in many, if any books written by men they share their hearts and their stories to prove their presuppositions concerning Christian hospitality. Her basic premise like Butterfield in this; “To be human is to long for home.” She masterfully paints the picture of how important a “home” truly is and how God and His Church

can provide that for those who are grieved by “homelessness” of a soul. She says, *“Home was one of humanity’s first gifts. I’ve become convinced that what happens from Genesis to Revelation can be told as a home story: God makes a home, sinners take leave, and the Father bids our return.”* (“...bids our return” as in the case of the prodigal’s Sons Father...there was always a place to go back to and if we are His we will come home.) In the first part of this book she goes beyond the statement made before to explain that there is the cultural mandate before us as well... she says, *“Keeping Place isn’t, however, only about the longing for home; it’s also about its shared labor. There is work to be done in the world God has made and will remake; there is housekeeping, if you will.”* As I said saying things in ways that we...men...would not say it...housekeeping is so feminine...we would prefer cultural mandate. But which truly clarifies the calling God has given us as His children? Yes, this book is written with God’s woman in mind...but as I have said before there is much for us men to learn from reading “women’s books”, if you will!

**47. THE SWORD, (The Last Cavaliers Series Book 2)** by Gilbert Morris (2011). Obviously, I did pick this series back up. I thought I had to re-read some of the first one in the series **THE CROSSING** but really each book stands on its own. This book in the series is on the life of J.E.B.Stuart and how he intersects with another of the Tremayne family, Clay Tremayne. Now Clay is mentioned in the first book but there is no mention of Yancy Tremayne (the family scoundrel) in this book which is a disappointment but doesn’t really distract from the rest of this story. In this series there is always 2 love stories going on with a whole lot of biblical content...like Jacob talking with Chantel Fortier (these 2 characters become as important as Jeb and Flora Stuart and Morgan Tremayne), *“I understand, daughter,” Jacob said sadly. “That is the thing about sin. It is a betrayal of God and a betrayal of others. Sometimes even of those we love most.”* The sword has as much to do with the Bible in this book as it does a weapon of war for the cavalry. The two stories wind together beautifully all along giving the reader a great look at the great and yet sometimes reckless Confederate general.

**48. THE SURRENDER, (The Last Cavaliers Series Book 3)** by Gilbert Morris (2012). The third in the series and in this case Robert E. Lee and his wife Mary are highlighted with yet another Tremayne; Morgan Tremayne who thinks he is in love with one woman but then that is the twist of the story. The main part of this book as with the other 2 is about the life and love and war experience of yet another Confederate general...Gen. Robert E. Lee. The stories intersect remarkably well even though Morgan doesn’t get involved with the war till a few years before the end as he was task with an enormous responsibility just before the war began that would take him time to take proper care before he too would go off to fight for Virginia in the War of Northern Aggression. The title speaks to more than just the ultimate surrender at the Appomattox Courthouse. A series of struggles and the death of a child leads to this exchange between Mary Lee and God, *“No, Mary thought savagely, I am not him. I am not like him! No one could be so humble, so forgiving, so ready to accept such grievances and call them merciful! I cannot say, “Your will be done!” All that was within her raged for a long time. But Mary Lee had known the Lord for many, many years. He had been her love, her companion, her most faithful friend long before Robert E. Lee was. And she realized this, and she knew her love for the Lord Jesus was stronger than her anger, stronger than her bitterness, stronger even than her love for Robert and her children. Her heart broke, and she surrendered.”* And then this comment from 2 of Gen. Lee’s servants, *“Meredith was openly crying. “I’d give my right arm and right leg if Marse*

*Robert didn't have to give himself up," he said miserably. "Me, too," Perry said quietly. "But one thing I've found, that the Lord don't want arms and legs. He wants sacrifice and surrender. Marse Robert's done sacrificed all his life, and now it's time for him to give up and let the Lord take keer of him." And then as he lie dying, the final words of Robert E. Lee with comment, "As men of war so often do, he returned to the battlefield as his time ran out. "Tell Hill he must come up," he said sternly, so plainly that all in the chamber could hear. But all battles come to an end, and Robert E. Lee's long battle did, too. "Strike the tent," he said firmly. It was his last surrender, and he finally went home."*

#### **49. KILLING ENGLAND: THE BRUTAL STRUGGLE FOR AMERICAN**

**INDEPENDENCE**, by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard (2017). Once again a riveting account of Revolutionary history surrounding Washington, Jefferson and Franklin... and King George of course... the history reads almost like a novel... because many of the events that have been before written about as God's providence to Washington and the new nation are almost too amazing to be real. But perhaps the best part of the book in the end is the footnotes where we read tidbits of history that would be hard to find anywhere else so easily... Tidbits like... the title Lieutenant coming into existence because it started meaning "in lieu of" a captain! Concerning Jefferson, O'Reilly chosen to speak of his "unwillingness" to give up slaves... even alluding to a possible business of slave trading ... and concerning Sally Henning... perpetuating the long held but unprovable relationship and gathering of multiple children with her after his beloved wife dies. He referenced the DNA test results from a 2012 finding, but according to others, these tests ended up being inconclusive at best and an out and out sham towards Jefferson's character at worst. Another helpful tool is at the end, there are listed the "main players" and what they did after the war...that is always fun. Overall a good historical read...but still nothing has surpassed **Killing Lincoln** in this series so far.

#### **50. SCOUTING ON TWO CONTINENTS: A LIFE SPENT SCOUTING IN THE WEST OF AMERICA AND SOUTH AFRICA**

, by Major Frederick Russell Burnham (first edition 1927, this edition 2018). This is an Interestingly read...it reads like a journal and fiction all at the same time... the first 6 chapters read like an Elmer Kelton or Louis L'Amour novel and yet they are the accounts of a real man. This man was perhaps the last of his kind, a true Allan Quartermain... a real life "Extraordinary Gentleman" ...from the fiction books and movie. His expertise... his prowess from the Western US paid dividends even in the "wilds" of Africa as a scout of fortune for the British against formidable odds - against the natives and the Boers! The founding of Rhodesia is an interesting history in and of itself as he recounts the personalities, the struggles and the horrors of his wartime experience. Very typical of the time; as much as he seemingly admired the "native" whether in America or Africa the author is in every way convinced that they are inferior to whites and as such ought to be in submission or at the very least should never be given authority over whites. In many ways this "great" outdoorsmen was a well-trained opportunist and mercenary...along with prospector...leaving his family behind in most cases to fend for themselves at great loss: many friends, but also 2 children, one of which a daughter, because of his "love" for Africa over everything and everyone else. But he was the last of the great frontiersmen and he was recognized for his accomplishments on many levels. He was given the great honor of being made a member of the Distinguished Service Order in England for all his work for them. *"The notification of this was a great surprise to me and its first effect was almost humiliating. I had already received two medals, several bars, the Thanks*

*of the Sovereign, and many other kindly favors without feeling really conceited or, as the English say, full of bounce."* Also, he was given another unprecedented and most highly prized favor from King Edward, *"...in confirming my majority in the British Army, was so gracious as to permit me to hold my rank without renouncing my American citizenship."* And one more example of how highly favored he was by kings and presidents, *"I was one of the eighteen officers chosen by Roosevelt for the proposed Roosevelt Division for service in France in the World War."* All in all these men saw so many things...things that he said he would put into another book of which I have not been able to find in print, if it was ever written.

### **51. 9 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: A MILITARY BRAT'S GUIDE TO LIFE AND SUCCESS,** by Harris Faulkner (2018).

This is a unique book in some ways and in others it is simply another self-help book. This book is unique in the fact that it is written from the perspective of a U S Army BRAT (An endearing term used to describe the children of military men and women and is actually an acronym for **Born Raised And Transferred**...and an accomplished and well respected newscaster for Fox News. This term BRAT also described my childhood as well. She writes, *"Being given the honorary rank of brat is the armed services' way of saying thank you to us kids for having grit too. They understand that when one member of a family joins the military, the whole family bears the weight of their service. We sacrifice time with that parent while they are deployed; we move wherever our loved one is needed; we uproot our lives; we leave our friends behind; and we start all over again with a supportive and positive attitude because it helps our loved one do his or her job effectively and return home to us safely."* So this book pulls from her years of experience in "the military" ...watching and listening to her father. Her whole world and life view was shaped by her father's approach to life. She says again, *"...think about one of the primary appeals the military held for my dad: He liked the fact that there are clearly defined steps to getting promoted to each rank—to living up to the potential each stripe represents. You have to fulfill one manageable goal at a time before you can arrive at the big one. Every time you set and achieve a measurable and realistic goal you will be gaining faith in yourself and the system of order."* Her rules are simple; #1-Recruit your special forces...surround yourself with like-minded people; #2-deal with your demons...see your weaknesses and overcome them and don't blame others; #3-Stay ready...always prepare for success and failure before you even get started. *"To this day, my dad still believes that you can do anything if you want to badly enough and if you practice. There is no end to your potential if these two factors are involved."* #4-Devise your mission...make a plan, a purpose statement measurable and achievable. #5- Wear Camo...dress for success and fun...she loves camo. "As one marine said, "You dress according to what the battle lines look like." I took that comment in for a second and began to see the even greater power of camo. It became clear that it's not only about hiding in plain sight or about adapting. It is also about consciously bringing a different approach or strategy to the environment you are in." #6-Unleash the power of integrity...this one is clear even in this day and age. #7-Think Like a General...take charge but also be a servant-leader. #8-Own Your Moment... *"During this process I also figured out that if you can just reach up and easily grab something, it probably doesn't have a lot of value. Your effort has to match your purpose, your mission, and that all-important goal."* #9- When things fall apart, believe you have the answer...this is more than the power of positive thinking...for if you have done the rest then you will learn from failure and move on to greater success. One of the best parts of this book comes in the last chapter as she lets her readers in on what was going through her mind and why she was doing what she was doing during the last days of her mom's life. She lets us in on

these intimate details to show how her 9 Rules enabled her to move on and how the lessons she has communicated were spawned from the most important people in her life for so many years... her parents.

**52. THE ROAD TO DAWN: JOSIAH HENSON AND THE STORY THAT SPARKED THE CIVIL WAR**, by Jared Brock (2018). The Road to Dawn deals with the story of Josiah

Henson escaping slavery in Maryland and Kentucky and running off with his family to Canada to establish a “freeman” sanctuary area called Dawn (one of the final stops on the Underground railroad) and his on-going story of rescuing other runaway slaves and bringing them to safety. Most have heard of Harriet Tubman but very few have heard of Josiah Henson, whose very life story spurred Harriet Beecher Stowe to write **UNCLE TOM’S CABIN**, which many historians say is the book that started the Civil War. Josiah immediately understood the importance of **UNCLE TOM’S CABIN** and later wrote of its launch: *“When this novel of Mrs. Stowe came out, it shook the foundations of this world. It shook the Americans out of their shoes and of their shirts. It left some of them on the sandbar barefooted and scratching their heads, so they came to the conclusion that the whole thing was a fabrication.”* The story of his “deliverance” from slavery...his escaping to Canada...the Christian friends along the way...even the work trying to establish a school for black children at freeman settlement, Dawn, which didn’t work out in the end is a story of inspiration and faith and ought to be read by all who are interested in the process of emancipation that gripped this country and still affects us years later. He rescued 118 slaves from their horror. He won a medal at the first World’s fair in London. He was entertained by Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle and at the White House by President Rutherford B. Hayes, and along the way preached to literally hundreds of people from America to England. A man of strong faith and of conviction for his time that needs to be remembered in our time.

**53. A HEART SET FREE: A JOURNEY TO HOPE THROUGH THE PSALMS OF LAMENT**, by Christina Fox (2016). This is the book that our Women of Virtue are currently

reading. I read these books because as I have said before, “there is much for us men to learn”. A few months ago, I began to read this book but I guess I was too wrapped up with wanting to go on vacation for my first impression was that it didn’t do much for me. I was too wrapped up in myself to be sure. But “something” or “Someone” impressed upon me to start over so I reread it and have realized the gem this book is. This book is like a back to the Basics kind of book. The older we are in our faith we tend to get caught up in the latest and greatest idea of controversy in society or the church and we forget the basics are what keep us grounded. This book is like Vince Lombardi talking to his pro football players at the beginning of the season, *“Gentlemen, this is a football.”* When we forget the basics or look past the basic we are prone to miss God’s point. But this book is also written for the “new” believer...not necessarily new in the faith (while that may be true as well) but “new” in the sense that they are now seeking to look deeper and grow stronger in the faith for perhaps the first time. In this book she takes us to the Psalms, specifically the psalms of Lament that we might “discover” the hope that God has placed there for all His children. She says, *“In the Psalms I learned that sadness and grief were not signs of faithlessness, but part of life in a fallen world. Grief could walk beside joy and they were not in opposition to one another. Contentment was not an avoidance of emotions, but a God-centered expression of them.”* Also, *“The laments encourage us to instead face our feelings, look at them, give them names, acknowledge them and be honest about them. The laments give us permission and freedom to feel. They acknowledge that we are humans and that we have feelings. While it’s*

*true that our feelings are not always an accurate indicator of reality and often they exaggerate things (which we will discuss in a later chapter), our feelings do tell us something. They tell us that something is wrong."* One last quote that shows us her heart and desire for all God's people to understand God and His Word to be able to live in hope, *"The laments strip us of any and all pretense that we can be our own savior and that we can do life on our own. They reveal the truth of our helplessness and our utter need for mercy and grace. When we lament, it means that we acknowledge our great need for grace and that we are turning to the only One who can supply it."* Yet, another worthy book for "all" God's people to read!

**54. IN HARM'S WAY: THE SINKING OF THE U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS AND THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF IT'S SURVIVORS**, by Doug Stanton (2002). Wow! That is all I can say.... because this is a history, and a testimonial to the brave lives of the men of the U.S.S. Indianapolis in a way that is so riveting that this account is hard to put down. In fact, when I did put it down I felt almost as though I was letting thee men down for not digesting their whole story. The sinking of the U.S.S. Indianapolis and the aftermath was perhaps one of the greatest tragedies and military SNAFU's of all times. As the truth has finally come out the captain and its crew can now rest in peace. Doug Stanton has once again done a masterful job of research that truly honors the men of this brave and distinguished ship. He shows us their bravery in the face of certain death, their care for their fellow corpsmen and sailors and their extraordinary will to live. When you think of history you often think of some dry academic text book, but this is neither dry or academic and should be a must read for any and all serious about history. This like his book **Horse Soldiers** are destined to become the seminal authority on the topics and events they depict.

**55. CHOOSING A BIBLE**, by Leland Ryken (2005). This booklet was produced to help the Church determine the best Bible to purchase and use for its edification. A few years prior he had written **THE WORD OF GOD IN ENGLISH: CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIBLE TRANSLATION**, (2002). But it became clear that this book was too academic and didn't capture the attention of his intended audience...the Church. So he had Crossway produce this booklet to reveal the problem with "dynamic equivalence" in Bible translation which is the form that has been used in over a half century of translation. Dynamic equivalence takes so many liberties with the text that it distills the text at best or destabilizes the text at worst. For dynamic equivalent is more concerned with what the translators wants the text to mean to the reader than what the text actually says...whereas the essentially literal translations seek to uphold the original authors intent. After briefly contrasting the 2 styles of Bible translation he gives a brief chart in the back to let his readers know which Bibles will net the greatest edification.

**56. WHY OUR CHURCH SWITCHED TO THE ESV**, by Kevin DeYoung (2011). A helpful little booklet that kind of goes along with the booklet above. It is a testimonial as to why University Reformed Church made the change to the ESV while Kevin was the pastor there but it is like the booklet above a treatise for believers to continue switching...if they haven't already...too the ESV over the NIV. He makes it clear, however, that the translation we use is not a salvific issue..." DUH!" ...but that the translation we use will in fact, aid or detract from our maturing properly in the Lord. And I concur...the arguments he makes for changing to the ESV are the same ones that I use when talking to people about which translation to choose. The essentially literal translation enables us to know the "words" that God used impressing upon us

the vocabulary that we need in worship to understand our God as he intended. But this also aids us in training our children with the correct vocabulary so they grow up knowing God's Word and its meaning...not just its meaning as if it was someone's commentary.

**57. GOSPEL RESET: SALVATION MADE RELEVANT**, by Ken Ham (2018). Mr. Ham is a world-renowned apologetics teacher who is also the CEO of Answers in Genesis. In this booklet (125 pages or so), he makes a compelling case that our witness for Christ ought to be based more on the Acts 17 model of Paul than the Acts 2 model of Peter. His basic premise is that the Acts 2 audience had an understanding of the true God and the audience of Acts 17 most like much of the 1st world today does not. The Acts 17 crowd were dealing with questions of which God?...Sin?...Why death?...Savior? And so his conclusion is and always has been to teach the gospel the way God meant for it to be taught ...from the beginning...re-introducing that God that has always been, His creation and the Fall...this is where the Gospel Reset must begin. The methodology is not hard but it may take a bit longer...for the old methods of Repent and Receive don't work as well as they used to because God expects us to cultivate the garden by de-weeding and re-planting...working and keeping it. In this book as is usual with him he makes a lot of how we as parents and then the Church are teaching our children...are we teaching them the whole "story" or just the condensed version? A great little book full of information and insights that are not earth shattering new but it has been packaged well.

**58. PARADISE OPENED: THE SECRETS, MYSTERIES, AND RARITIES OF DIVINE LOVE. OF INFINITE WISDOM, AND OF WONDERFUL COUNSEL LAID OPEN TO PUBLIC VIEW**, by Thomas Brooks (1675). You gotta love this title. The longer the title often the longer the treatise...but in this case it is a simple treatise of just under 400 pages. This is one of the greatest apologetics for the comfort and hope of the Christian life. He sets out to Scripturally "prove" the Covenant of Grace by giving it the treatment that it is due for a people to understand God our Father's plan for us. But he also endeavors to "prove" the Covenant of Redemption made between God the Father and God the Son and how save for it there would be no Covenant of Grace. In this century we don't make such distinction just simply combining the two into one when we talk about the Covenant of Grace...which is not altogether wrong...but the time he spends talking about the properties and purposes of the Covenant of Redemption is well worth a reader's time and is extremely edifying in the faith. The import of all of this; *"If a man is under a covenant of grace—and does not know it, how can he rejoice in the Lord? How can he sing out the high praises of God? How can he delight himself in the Almighty? How can he triumph in Christ Jesus? How can he cheerfully run the race which is before him? How can he bear up bravely and resolutely in his sufferings for the cause of Christ? How can he besiege the throne of grace with boldness? How can he be temptation-proof? How can he be dead to this world? How can he long to be with Christ in that other world? And if a man be under a covenant of works—and does not know it, how can he lament and bewail his sad condition? How can he be earnest with God to bring him under the bond of the new covenant? How can he desire after Christ? How can he choose the things that please God? How can he cease from doing evil, and learn to do well? How can he lay hold on eternal life? How can he be saved from wrath to come?"* And then there is this; *"The covenant of redemption between God and Christ secures the covenant of grace between God and believers; for what God promises to us, he did, before the foundation of the world, promise to Jesus Christ, (Titus 1:2). And therefore, if God the Father should not make good his promises to his saints, he would not make good his promises to his*



*dearest Son, which for any to imagine would be high blasphemy. God will be sure to keep touch with Jesus Christ; and therefore we may rest fully assured that he will not fail to keep touch with us.*" This book is such an encouraging and helpful read.

**59. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SPOTS OF THE GODLY, AND OF THE WICKED,**

by Jeremiah Burroughs (1668). Most of the writings of the Reformed pastors of the 16-18th Centuries are truly rare finds...but this one falls into a category all to itself. I have read many a treatise or a sermon on the victory we have over the power of sin as those who have been declared justified (see the above work), but nowhere, until now, have I come across an exposition on the difference between the spots (leprosy/sins) of God's people contrasted with the spots (leprosy/sins) of the unbeliever/ wicked. The title is one of the best I have seen in a long time, as well. It seems that as a pastor this question had come up and so he took 3 sermons to discuss this topic so that all of us could answer the question that is often posed and maybe even wondered about by us concerning our sin in this life. He preached the sermons in 1645 but then he put this treatise together in 1668 because, it seems, the topic is still a lively one. In the midst of a rather systematic study of every possible scenario that deals with sin he does seek to encourage God's people along the way with simple truths like this one; *"It's true, the Lord will not charge these spots upon thy soul that art in Christ; yet he doth expect that thou shouldst be humbled for them."* But he also lets them know very clearly that as long as we live in this world we will carry these spots...but take heart they have been cleansed and will ultimately be done away with...completely. *"Now if thy heart be thus, that thou account the love of Christ to consist in this, and that thou can prize Christ upon This, That he gave himself, to the end that he might cleanse thy soul from thy sin; surely thou dost prize cleansing from sin indeed; and if thou dost prize it at so high a rate, this is a good Argument that thou art one of Gods Children: Therefore, daily exercise thy Faith upon this Christ, by the applying of the blood of Jesus Christ to thy soul,(Rom. 12:1-3) and the renewing of the work of thy repentance, seeing that, as long as thou livest, there will be spots."* Very informative to be sure...spoken from a pastor's heart to his people. A very easy read and easy to digest as well. And you gotta love the title as well. Another freebie from Monergism.com.

**60. 13 HOURS: THE INSIDE ACCOUNT OF WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN BENGHAZI,**

by Mitchell Zuckoff with the Annex Security Team (2014). As the author says in the beginning of the book this book was written to give as accurate accounting of the event from the people that were actually there. He also states that it was not the purpose of this book to take a position on any of the many theories about what happened from people who were not there that night and early morning. However, in writing this book and giving as much detail as they do, the author and the operators that were left from the fight that night do in fact state clearly their position which flies in the face of many of the positions held by prominent officials on both sides of the aisle politically. This book is as much a re-telling of the story by those who were there as it is a testament to the bravery of those who did not come back alive. As they said in one place, "A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself." The men who died needed to be remembered properly and you read this book and come away realizing that this book unlike other books on this event, has done just that. The players in this drama are highlighted in such a way simply to shed light on what actually happened on the night of September 11, 2012 and into the morning of September 12th from the perspective of those who lived it and suffered accordingly by it. This narrative account is a fast paced, comprehensive read

and well worth your time. It honors those who have worked for peace in the area, those who fought to protect American lives that night and those who died for their country in a part of the world that no one paid much attention to until that fateful night in September.

**61. CLASSIC TEACHINGS ON THE NATURE OF GOD: THE HOLINESS OF GOD; CHOSEN BY GOD; PLEASING GOD (3 Books in one)**, by R.C. Sproul (2010). Having these three books in one volume makes it easier to keep the flow of thought going. These are not a condensed version of the 3 books but rather the complete books placed in one volume. We have just finished reading The Holiness of God for our men's group reading this year and it seems to have been a real hit. As we have been reading The Holiness of God I have been re-reading Chosen by God and Pleasing God again. The first time I read The Holiness of God was in 1987 a couple of years after I had listened to the cassette tapes on the teaching of this series. This book has been so influential in my Christian formation through the years that going back over it again with the guys brought things to light that I either never saw or had forgotten. Chosen by God discusses the various views of predestination. R.C. makes it abundantly clear that most all true believers believe in predestination; at least in some definition of predestination. But it is just as clear that they just don't understand what the Bible means so they despise the term. To be biblical is to embrace the biblical doctrine of predestination... to do any less rejects the work of God for all who are His. Also, he has a helpful Q and A at the end of this book that deal with the most common questions surrounding this doctrine. With Pleasing God we have as R.C. calls it "...a practical guide for Christian living..." because every Christian should have a passion to please God. However, we need constant reminders and help in being able to please our God and this is what occurs through our sanctification and that is ultimately what the book is about...our sanctification. (plus or minus 400 pages for all books in one volume)

**62. THE THINGS OUR FATHERS SAW: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF THE WORLD WAR II GENERATION FROM HOMETOWN, USA- VOLUME 1; VOICES OF THE PACIFIC THEATER**, by Matthew Rozell (2015). This book, and the rest of the books Volumes 2-4, are not unique...but how he got his interviews and information is definitely ingenious. As a history teacher who had an epiphany concerning the vanishing WW II generation, he decided to give his students the assignment of finding a WWII veteran and get his and/or her story so that they would not be forgotten. As he repeated from one of his sources, "Dying for freedom isn't the worst that could happen. Being forgotten is." And so began a multi-year research that would ultimately develop into a 4 volume set that tells the story of over 200 veterans from the Pacific to Europe...on the land, sea and in the air. This volume highlights 32 of those brave men and women from "Hometown, USA in the case from towns in upstate New York...some who lived and some who die but their story was known and retold to the author or one of his students...even the story of one Randy Holmes, who represents all those who went off to war and never were heard from again in their hometown. Out of all of these interviews develop what the author could have only hoped for and that was an intimate connection of one generation to another. The stories are touching, heroic, and normal for those who went off to war to protect our freedoms and the freedoms of so many others who would be now living under even worse oppression had these men and women not been willing to sacrifice their lives and livelihoods for their country and for others. A great read for those who want to remember...a very moving book for all who need to remember.

**63. EVEN BETTER THAN EDEN: NINE WAYS THE BIBLE'S STORY CHANGES EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR STORY**, by Nancy Guthrie (2018).

Nancy Guthrie is a member of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tenn. and she hosts a podcast for the Gospel Coalition. She teaches in this book clearly, succinctly and with a vision of the greater truths but she integrates the “minor” events into that bigger covenantal picture so that we come away with an overall sense of hope for the Day to come. Eden was great but the New Earth...the new creation...will be greater...not because this world will be no more but because this world like everything else that God re-makes will be much more than it was/is. She highlights 9 ways that the Bible will change our story because they help us understand His Story. 9 ways that highlight creation to the consummation ...the whole story...so that we are left with hope and with confidence as we come to know our story better...a story that depends on Jesus and our unity with Him. I love how she sums up the entire book in her conclusion, “You and I were meant to enjoy an environment, a sense of purpose and satisfaction, and an intimacy with God and each other that is even better than Adam and Eve enjoyed in Eden.” A great book that all God’s people should read.

**64. HEAVEN: YOUR REAL HOME...FROM A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE (EXPANDED EDITION)**, by Joni Eareckson Tada (1995, 2018).

Joni begins with this statement, “It’s odd to express appreciation to a wheelchair, but I do. Almost 5 decades of quadriplegia, and almost as many studying God’s Word, have deepened in me my gratitude to God for these bolts and bars.” This first statement wraps up the book well. She will say it over and over again in many different ways that we live on this broken, painful, evil world for the purpose of being prepared for Heaven: Our Real Home. This book was first given to me shortly after our first son, Zachary, was killed coming home from work on his bicycle. I read it but didn’t really appreciate it at the time. I was not really interested in Heaven at the time...my interest was focused around “my loss” ...so Heaven wasn’t unreal to me but it just wasn’t important at the time except that it was the place where my son was and I was separated from my son by what appeared and what felt to be an insurmountable chasm. But now 20 plus years later as I was finishing it up again, her explanations, images and expositions about heaven and the New Earth have stirred my heart and my desire for Home. I loved this, “Heaven has been, and always shall be, a matter of faith. “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see,” reads Hebrews 11: 1. Stop and pick that verse apart. Faith means believing in realities that go beyond sense and sight. It is being sure of something you hope for, that is, sure about unfulfilled things in the future. And it’s being assured of something you can’t see, that is, being aware of unseen divine realities all around you. To put it another way, faith not only makes you sure that heavenly streets of gold really exist, but it helps you see something beyond the earthly streets of asphalt that exist in the here and now.” Joni, from her unique experience and position (from a wheelchair), enables us to see many of our preconceived ideas about this life, not so we can feel bad for our immaturity, but so we can get a glimpse or maybe a broad picture of what is better than this life and the reality that Heaven is our real home...and this place, as it is now, can never be our home....but one day...on the Day...we will be brought Home!

**65. GOD’S PROMISES: OF SALVATION, LIFE AND ETERNITY**, by Charles H.

Spurgeon (This is a re-working of the original work According to Promise, 1887, Revised Edition, 2017) So this is a re-read for me. I love this version of this classic work. This work is extremely hopeful for the believer who is struggling with actually believing God’s promises...for

he actually deals with his doubts and our doubts that keep us from experiencing the fullness of our salvation because we have such a hard time “believing” the promises of God. He says at the onset of this book, “I desire to help you examine yourself spiritually. I want you to go further than examination, though, and attain such abundance of grace that your holy and happy condition will become a witness to yourself.” He speaks without hesitation as one who has struggled himself which history tells us that he did while at the same time never straying too far and being used by God to bring the gospel message to hundreds of thousands of people during his short life. It is clear to him that we often struggle because we are unwittingly still too connected with the world. At one point he goes so far as to say, “If you would feel freer and more at home in society than in the church of God, then know assuredly that you belong to the world. Do not deceive yourself. As your heart is, so are you. No amount of force or work can turn Ishmael into Isaac, or a person of the world into an heir of heaven.” His candidness is there because of the times in which he lived...similar to our times where people were questioning the Word of God and as such questioning the promises of God which leads to a lack of assurance and a weakening of the influence of the Church. One last quote, “God’s promises are so timed as to secure His glory in their fulfillment, and this must be good enough for us when we can see no other reason for delay.” This shorter version of the original is a real gem and has been being offered as a free Kindle download through Amazon but I don’t know for how long!

**66. THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH**, by Louis Berkhof (1928, 2004, 2018) In short, Berkhof discusses the full spectrum of assurance. He speaks of objective (concrete fact) and subjective (experiential) assurance. The book helps you better understand all the possibilities of assurance that you have attained or can attain depending on your walk with the Lord. Remember this was first written in 1928; digest this from the preface, *“We are not living in an age in which Christian certitude can be taken for granted. The enemy is exerting himself to destroy the foundation which God has laid for our faith in his excellent Word. Doubts respecting the most fundamental truths of the Bible are rampant everywhere and are also making inroads in the Church of Jesus Christ. Question-marks are fast taking the place of positive assertions of the truth. Such an atmosphere is not conducive to the assurance of salvation, but threatens to rob the Christian of this precious gem. If it ever was necessary to cultivate the assurance of faith, it is necessary to-day, for without it the present generation of Christians will not be equal to the tremendous task that rests upon its shoulders, **“to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints,”** and to guard the good thing that was committed unto it. It is hoped that this little treatise may be of some service in the cultivation of assurance especially among our rising generation.* There is an interesting part where Dr. Berkhof seeks to pit the Heidelberg catechism and the Westminster at odds with one another over this subject stating that the first sounds a stronger and more assured (pun intended) note than the latter. But as he progresses through this treatise he actually makes the case that they really aren’t that far off from one another...same thoughts different words... he even comes to admit as the Westminster does; *“Though there is a subjective certitude that is of the essence of faith, it is quite possible that a true believer will, for a considerable time, lack the consciousness of this blessed assurance...It is already apparent from the preceding that we cannot make the distinction between different kinds of assurance without distinguishing between faith in its initial stages and faith in its more developed form. Just as a new-born babe is at once perfect in parts, containing all that is necessary unto the making of a man, so true faith is at once perfect in parts but not yet in degree.* So in the end, the author definitely “protesteth” too much.... there is not enough

difference that separates the Reformed and the Presbyterian to take issue with especially when he concedes that there will be times when believers doubt in their faith. But the main point is that as a people we lack assurance and it has weakened our witness.... and as such our pulpits should once again be preaching this truth to our people.

**67. ON KEEPING THE HEART**, by John Flavel (1630-1691) (This book/treatise was first published sometime between 1670 and 1680...it has been republished and reformatted many times and lastly in 2018 in this electronic format to offer as a free download by Monergism.) This book was a treatise originally entitled "*A Saint Indeed*", based on **Proverbs 4:23**, which exhorts us to "*keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs/issues of life*". And Flavel carefully and exhaustively unfolds all that is involved in "keeping the heart with vigilance", and how that should be the "great business" of every Christian. The keeping of the heart, Flavel would have us to understand, involves the "*diligent and constant use and improvement of all holy means and duties to preserve the soul from sin and maintain its sweet and free communion with God*". A fact that is continually supported in Scriptures and by all men of God through the ages. In fact he also states, "*The stability of our souls in the hour of TEMPTATION depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts. The careless heart is an easy prey to Satan in the hour of temptation. Satan's principal batteries are raised against the heart; if he wins that—he wins all, for the heart commands the whole man. Alas! how easy a conquest is a neglected heart! It is not more difficult to surprise such a heart, than for an enemy to enter that city whose gates are open and unguarded. It is the watchful heart which discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes to its strength.*" In his almost exhaustive work he sets out six reasons why Christians should make this the great business of their lives: 1) the glory of God, 2) the sincerity of our profession, 3) the beauty of our conversation (conduct of life), 4) the improvement of our graces, 5) the comfort of our souls, and 6) the stability of our souls in the hour of temptation. Among other applications of the doctrine, he discusses 12 special "seasons" in the Christian's life, which call for special diligence in keeping our hearts. This book is as comprehensive as you would think from such a "good" Presbyterian scholar as this who also had a stout pastors heart and yet, it is not a long book, as his actual writing only covers 130 pages plus or minus. With a pastor's heart he exhorts us throughout this work to keep our heart and here is one of his example prayers for us to pray: "*O for a better heart! O for a heart to love God more; to hate sin more; to walk more evenly with God. Lord! Do not deny me such a heart; whatever you deny me! Give me a heart to fear you, to love and delight in you!*" *It is observed of an eminent saint, that when he was confessing sin, he would never give over confessing until he had felt some brokenness of heart for that sin; and when praying for any spiritual mercy, would never give over that suit until he had obtained some relish of that mercy.*"

**68. LIFE-GIVING LEADERSHIP**, by Karen Hodge and Susan Hunt (2018). This is a transformational book that certainly ought to be read by all women in the church that sense a call, no matter how small, to lead other women to the truths of God's Word...but this is a book that all of God's people ought to read. It is so filled with great leadership principles, leadership applications and leadership exhortations like you would expect a decent book on leadership to have but it is grounded and supported with wonderful theology throughout that opens the Scriptures defining the leadership role than anything that I have read in years on leadership. Karen and Susan come from different areas and different times with very different circumstances but throughout this book they speak with one mind and one heart because they are equally

committed to Christ and His Word as the foundation for their lives. In disciplining a women some years ago Karen would often ask her this straight forward question; *“Is God your reference point for making decisions?”* And then one day she finally told her why she asks the question; *“I want you to understand that your starting point determines the trajectory of everything about your life. Is your reference point God and His Word, or is it culture, your experience, emotions and peers? Your answer will determine who gets the glory.”* The back of the book sums it all up for us when it says; *“Susan and Karen challenge us to: 1) Think biblically and lead covenantally; 2) find our confidence in Christ, not ourselves; 3) set our purposes on eternal goals instead of specific tasks; 4) reflect Jesus, not agendas; 5) lead with prayer and wisdom; 6) seek covenantal community; 7) Submit to God and the complementarian leadership of the church.”*