2023 Pastor’s Reading List

1. **GOSPEL WORSHIP, or the Right Manner of Sanctifying the Name of God in These Three Ordinances- Hearing God’s Word, Receiving the Lord’s Supper and Prayer** by Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1646). Digital copy through Monergism 2018. The Puritans were masters of writing whole treatises like this one that is over 300 pages on one verse even a portion of a verse from Leviticus 10:3- ***“Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the LORD has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’ And Aaron held his peace.”*** But while his original intent was to write on Lev. 10:1-3 he generally focused on ***“Among those who are near me I will be sanctified”.*** Or as the KJV says***, “I will be sanctified in them who come nigh me.”*** In this classic work, Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs gives 14 sermons on the regulative principle, meticulously explaining the right manner of approaching and worshipping God. His chapter on preparation for worship should have probably been at the beginning but each chapter dealing with our opportunity…our privilege and our requirement covers all aspects of each so that when I was finished I had to go and repent of my lack and I am the preacher…probably why I was so convicted. In a day that promotes man-made forms of worship, Gospel Worship is a call to biblical worship of the Triune God though the means that He has instituted. Burroughs shows how important worship is to God and teaches us how to ***“give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name”* (Ps. 29:2).** He makes plain that we do not need new forms of worship to be relevant, but to renew old forms of worship. This is definitely one of those works that I wish someone would update and modernize for it is such an important work in the discussion of true worship. *“First, That whosoever was to partake of this must be holy himself; none can sanctify God, but he must have a sanctified heart himself. Secondly, this ordinance it must be received in a holy communion; There must be a communion of saints for this ordinance; and it cannot be received anywhere else but in a communion of saints. Thirdly, the holy disposition of soul particularly, or the qualifications of soul that are required for the sanctifying of God's name in this ordinance. Fourthly, the manner of the explicit goings out of the soul, that there are to bee at that very time of receiving. Fifthly, the keeping of the institution of Christ in our receiving. These things are required for the sanctifying of the name of God in this ordinance.”* He actually puts in periods when he constructs a list otherwise that sentences may drag on for a page or 2…but having said that it is more than worthy of working through. On Fact, there may be more mined because we have to sift through each and word phrase.
2. **HOME-MAKING,** by J. R. Miller (1882, copy write from Monergism 2022). This is not a book for wives only…he covers the topics of his day that needed the most instruction, namely, the wedded life, the Christian Husband and Wife, Christian parenting, the Christian child’s responsibilities, brother and sisters in a family, home life, religion in the home and home memories. These were the topics most on the mind of many in that Victorian Era…and his instruction while biblically sound in most places reflect the cultural expectations of the day making this a great book of cultural studies for the Christian*. “To the evenings, and especially the winter's evening, belong mainly the influences of domestic life. Its few short hours are all the uninterrupted time we have at our disposal, to know our own family—and be known by them. The impression which home leaves upon the child, comes largely from its evenings. The visions which memory delights in conjuring up, are the old scenes about the evening fire or the evening lamp. When we think of the importance of the evenings at home, it certainly seems worthwhile to plan to save as many as possible of them, from outside demands—for the sacred work within. It would be better that we should neglect some social attraction or entertainment, or miss some political meeting, or be absent from some lodge or society—than that we should neglect the culture of our own homes, and let our children slip away from us forever.”* The message of **Home-Making** is a powerful one for… *“Home life is meant to be beautiful, ennobling and victorious.”* For all the information offered here his basic premise the God intends for each person to understand their role in the family, with the ultimate goal of transformation of the individual, the home and the society for the glory of God. *“Each member of the household has a part in the family life, and the fullest happiness and blessedness of the home can be attained, only when each one's part is faithfully fulfilled. If any one member of the family fails in love or duty, the failure affects the whole household life—just as one discordant voice in a company of singers spoils the music. The husband has a part all his own, which no other can do. How does the Word of God define his duties? What is involved in his part in the marriage relation? What does he owe his wife? One word covers it all– love. "Husbands, love your wives!" comes the command with all divine authority. This counsel is short—but becomes exceedingly long when it is fully accepted and observed.”* This is not a book to check off the list of things he writes about seeking perfection in this life. It first of all reminded me of how far I fell as a father and a husband, but before the guilt set in II also realized that these are the ideals this is the day to day mission and somedays will be better than others…and that sometimes the desire for a correct understanding actually motivates us to teach and do even later in life. This is one of his books that you have to work at reading…but it is worth the work just like the **Home-Making** he writes about.
3. **LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED, Kindle edition,** by Richard Sibbes (Monergism 2018). I read this book every few years and as always it was and is agreat comport to me. This treatise is an adaptation of three of his sermons on **John 14:1*-“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”*** This treatise is an excellent reminder of how well this man of God can communicate down through the ages. The whole point of this “book” is to give Christians the truth about how Jesus is our anchor in the troubling times of life. Everyone ought to read this for trouble is just around the next corner in most cases. It is written to believers who have doubts and fears about this life and eternity, since we all do at some point during the day, the week or the year. Sibbes carefully explains how Jesus will take care of our every need when we truly believe in …trust in Him. He states, *“But how shall we know that our hearts are more troubled than they should be? For I lay this for a ground: That we may sin in being over much troubled at things for which it is a sin not to be troubled. If they had not been at all affected with the absence of Christ, it had been a sin, and no less than stupidity; yet it was their sin to be over much troubled. In a word, therefore, for answer, a trouble is sinful when it hinders us in duty or from duty; when it hinders us in duties to God or to others; or from duty, that is, when the soul is disturbed by it, and, like an instrument out of tune, made fit for nothing, or like a limb out of joint, that moves not only uncomelily, but painfully, and becomes unfit for action. When we find this in our trouble, we may know it is not as it should be.”* Charles Spurgeon has said that Richard Sibbes delivers diamonds in one hand and pearls in another. He takes us expositionally and systematically through this “simple text” to show us how important our position “in Christ” is in this troubled filled world. Jesus speaks to us at all times …in our celebrations and in our troubles and of course, it is our troubles that we have a harder time trusting Him just like His disciples when He told them He would be leaving them. Jesus tells His disciple and us by extension, when we struggle, ***“Let not your hearts be troubled.”***But at the moment that may not be enough unless we understand what trouble Jesus has dealt with on our behalf. We may say, *“Aye, but my faith is weak. The office of faith is to knit to Christ, and the weakest faith will do that, as well as the strongest: and when we are once one with Christ, then our perfection is to be found in him. It is the office of faith to bring us to Christ; and then to look to him for all perfections and for thy title to heaven, and not to faith; and true faith is faith even in the least degree of it. As we say of the elements, every drop of water is water, and every spark of fire is fire. And, therefore, the argument will not hold, if we have not much faith, we have no faith; or if we have no feeling, we have no faith.”* The remedies come when we believe in God through Christ Jesus our Lord. ***“Believe in God; believe also in me.”*** *“When we have found any work of grace; and thereupon that our faith is true, we ought to comfort ourselves, and to maintain our comfort by all means. Every grace is but faith exercised. When our Saviour saith, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me,' he might have said also in particular, Be patient, be contented, be comforted. But he names the root of all—Faith—wherein all graces are radically; which is therefore discerned in the fruits of it. So that if any grace be found, as love to the brethren, hope of life everlasting, or the like, there is faith. For the root and branches be together, though the root is not always discerned. And therefore when we discover any true faith in the fruit of it, let us support and comfort ourselves with it. For when a man is in Christ, and by Christ an heir of heaven, and a child of God, what in the world can befall him, that should deject overmuch, and cast him down?”* He wraps up this sermon with this thought for those of us who believe that we need to remember, *“What loss, what cross, what want of friends? Hath he not all in God, and in Christ, and in the promise? Do not the promises weigh down all discouragements whatsoever? Surely they do. And therefore we must strive against dejection. For besides what I spake the last day, it is a dishonour to the profession of religion, which is in itself so glorious; a dishonour to God, and to Christ, that when we have such glorious prerogatives and privileges, which the angels themselves admire, yet every petty cross and loss that we meet withal in the world should cast us down. We should take heed exceedingly of this, and should labour every day to have a more and more clear sight of the promises that belong unto us, and to know the privileges of Christianity, and renew our faith in them continually, that they may be fresh to us in all temptations, and occasions whatsoever.”* This is yet another free GEM from Monergism to be downloaded and read over and over again, because we let our hearts be troubled and our belief in God is often weak.
4. **A LIFE CULTIVATED: How Scriptures Speak to All of Life,** edited by Joel R. Beeke and Ryan M. McGraw (2023). This is actually a free download from Reformation Heritage Books that all ought to download and read specifically men. The topics covered are very reminiscent from the older books that I have recently reviewed this year and last., like: **HOME-MAKING** by J.R. Miller (see above), **SILENT TIMES: A Book to Help in Reading the Bible into Life,** by J. R. Miller (see 2022 Pastor’s Reading list), **THE DUTIES OF PARENTS,** by J.C. Ryle (see 2022 Pastor’s Reading list), and even the books on aging that you will find in last year’s reading list for they all talk about what the Bible says concerning the important areas of life. This book is like them but much more exhaustive and contemporary …also, just as insistent since it is in the Bible (duh!) so Christians don’t have options to do or not do these, but giving more understanding in the possibility of many applications. These were separate articles that have been put together in one book for easier consumption by the reader. Some of them are long and boring... (Just saying) but the rest are long, encouraging and convicting (most fall into the latter category). Topics like: *“How Can I Do All Things for God’s Glory”, “How Can I Live out Faith from the Inside Out”, How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?”* (One of my personal favorites in this book), *“How Can I build a Godly Marriage?”, How Should Men Lead Their Families”, “How Can I Have Peace in Life’s Storms”, “Why Must I Forgive?”, ”How can I Overcome Lust?”, “How Can I Grieve to God’s Glory?”, How Should I manage Time?”* and for our purposes here, *“How Can I Serve God at Work?”* This is not all the topics covered, but they are all topics that the church needs to teach clearly with one voice as the Scriptures say...which sadly we do not. Like HOME-MAKING (review above) the Church needs to tackle every area of the Christian life...home, work, worship and recreation. Some of these are not popular for the Church to take stands on given how the world likes things l wild and loose, but the Bible is the Bible…compromise means death…or similar consequence. Isn’t our spouse worth our being what God intends for us to be? Aren’t our children worth our doing as God commands for their benefit in the future even if they don’t like it now? Isn’t God’s glory worth simply doing what He says to do? A worthwhile download and read…though also, like the Puritans it needs to be a slow read.
5. **ANCHORING YOUR CHILD TO GOD’S TRUTH IN A GENDER-CONFUSED CULTURE,** by Dr. Gary Yagel who was a PCA pastor for 20 years and now is director of Forging Bonds of Brotherhood and the Men’s Ministry Advisor of the PCA. This book was written to give parents a credible biblical argument against the gender-confused society that we live in who are speaking all too often to our children through their schooling or through the media that we need to do a better job of having oversight of. This booklet (70 pages) deals with helping to understand the world we live in and how important a biblical worldview ids to have and to teach our children with. He seeks to give a biblical response to this Gender- fractured world…which is actually a normal outcome from so radically walking away from the God and faith of our fathers. He then biblical sexual identity. And then lastly he gives parents a call to inspire your children to embrace their call to godly manhood or womanhood. All in all a good read...well worth putting in your “security chest” for your family and using.
6. **DARK CLOUDS, DEEP MERCY: Discovering the Grace of Lament** by Mark Vroegop (2019). This book has been “out there for a couple of years but I have just been made aware of its availability and I am so thankful that I was. I have not read a book that has moved my heart concerning lament like this, since I read **Lament for a Son** by Nicholas Wolterstorff, who’s not particularly orthodox in all of his theological views, but then that is not the purpose of his book, which was to catalogue his walk through the grief of his son’s sudden death. **Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy** reminds us of the type of worship God requires and expects of His people for His glory and our good. This book touches every aspect of a biblical practice that has been a part of the practice of God’s people throughout the ages. This book answers the question biblically of how to walk through the griefs we encounter in this fallen broken world in a healthy and God honoring way. It gives as an actual road map on how to implement lament into our daily lives since walking through valleys seem to be more and more a reality than not in this present time between Christ’s two Comings. His definition while not necessarily new certainly is refreshing inn this day and age. *“Lament can be defined as a loud cry, a howl, or a passionate expression of grief. However, in the Bible lament is more than sorrow or talking about sadness. It is more than walking through the stages of grief. Lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust. Therefore, lament is rooted in what we believe. It is a prayer loaded with theology. Christians affirm that the world is broken, God is powerful, and he will be faithful. Therefore, lament stands in the gap between pain and promise.”* From his own heart at the grief of a still born daughter he writes of John Piper and a phrase that has become a staple for him in life. *“After a few encouraging words, he closed with a statement that has become an anchor for my soul and often my target in lament:* ***‘Keep trusting the One who keeps you trusting.’*** *This is how lament has served me and countless other believers. Tear-filled prayers, wrestling through tough questions, and banking my life on the promises of God are all part of the journey to keep me trusting. Learning to lament leads to trust. Laments pivot on God’s promises. I don’t know how many times I’ve concluded a lament prayer by simply saying, ‘Lord, I’m trusting you to keep me trusting.’ And that is where God designed lament to lead. Through turning to God in prayer, laying out our complaints, and asking boldly for God’s help, we are led to place our trust in a God who cares for us and hears us. Learning to lament gives us the grace to keep trusting.”* This book will go on my shelf right next the **Lament for a Son, Good Grief,** by Granger E. Westberg and **Heaven: Your Real Home** by Joni Eareckson Tada. This is THE book for our time in the church in exile in these days giving us heartfelt biblical …ancient path type of guidance on how God expects us to walk these valleys…with Him right by us!

1. **CHRIST’S INVITATION TO THE LABORING AND HEAVY LADEN,** by Thomas Boston, a Scottish Presbyterian minister 1676-1732 (probably first published in the mid-1800’s this particular work was E-formatted in 2020 by Monergism). This is a compilation of 4 sermons on the exposition of **Matthew 11:28- *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*** He sought to approach this from a slightly controversial way. While others were speaking of How Jesus is calling His own to His rest (and still do, by the way, think **GENTLE AND LOWLY** by Dane Ortland) he spends 4 sermon talking about how this is a universal calling ALL to come…but tucked in all throughout these sermons he says that only those who have been changed by the work the the spirit can hear and come and receive rest. As with all of his works he supports everything with the Scriptures themselves as his best interpreter...in fact some parts are literally mostly Scritpture as was a similar practice by most Puritans since there was such a dearth of knowing and understanding the Bible because of the RC Church. He seeks to speak of how all are being called over and over again from the beginning of the Bible to the end But that only those who are in Christ can come and receive His rest from their labor and heavy ladening. Towards the end of the 4th sermon he gets to the rest that Christ speaks of saying that there is at least a fourfold rest to be had in Christ. First, *“A rest, he says, in respect to sin is twofold. One, a rest from the guilt of sin, ‘****by His Stripes we are heal****ed.’* And then two, rest from the reigning power of sin, ***‘sin shall not have dominion over you.’*** Second, *a rest from the law*…not that we are lawless but we no longer bear its yoke of its curse. Third, *he speaks of the rest from weary labor* in which people are engaged when in quest of happiness, leading souls to enjoyment in God; ***“Return, unto your rest, O my soul! For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with you.”*** And lastly *a rest with respect to the troubles of the world.* He gives rest when we are in trouble when we actually rest in him…which is the peace that passes all understanding that even when we are in trouble we can still ‘Rejoice in the Lord and again I say Rejoice!’ And this all comes from Christ to His own…those who come when He calls.
2. **CAPTAIN’S MAKING: A Prequel to the Spacer Series of Books,** by Scott Bartlett (2022). An interesting new series and an interesting new author whose main goal in life is to write the best sci-fi-military space drama. Well, to that, these are good…much better than many I have looked at over the last few months…and one that I will continue to read going forward. Like the others that I like his character development begins pretty much immediately surrounding the crisis of life…in space. This particular book focuses on one Captain or is it Admiral or maybe Commander Edward Thatcher depending upon the timeline (yeah, that is what I said) that we are looking at. Anyway a human visitor from the future is found on an enemy ship that can bend space and time to their will…this is a ship where there shouldn’t be a human. Anyway, this human as he is dying tells a tale so amazing that it almost has to be believed and based on the level of belief in this story a whole plot is put forth to train the one man that can save the earth alliance and the whole human race from extinction….one Tad Thatcher, Edward’s grandson who is yet to be born. This is a long prequel because there is much ground to cover…and for those of us who come at the series after it has come out I can just continue on with the Spacer’s Series with this background information in place.
3. **First Command: Spacers Series(Book 1),** by Scott Bartlett (2022). Given the mystery surrounding Adm. Edward Thatcher’s grandson, Tad Thatcher (see above review **CAPTAIN’S MAKING: A Prequel)** we now see Tad rising through the ranks with all the baggage of being associated…being family…of the great and legendary Admiral to get his first command. He has worked hard to get this command something that most people haven’t seen and question how he got where he has …was it because of his family ties. Now in his own right the brass see his potential for he, like his grandfather is a master tactician in battle…on paper and in test simulation…coming up with new and innovative ways to combat an enemy yet to show itself publically in over 30 years but there none the less. This first command has a lot of intrigue and battles where Tad’s skills are put to the test and found NOT to be wanting…actually quite the contrary…He wins more than he loses…and you have to read the book to know what I am talking about. But there is one loss that is weighing heavy on his heart. The wormhole back to the Sol System, where his pregnant wife lives, has collapsed and so he is torn between doing his duty in this cut off system and finding a way back to his wife and child. Can he do both? Also, the author sent out and epilogue for the first book which introduces the readers to some possibly new characters that may yet further complicate Tad’s work and keep him from getting back anytime soon. All in all this author is one that in interesting, even compelling sometimes in an entertaining sort of way. Not as much humor but maybe that is because we are getting to now the characters and they are getting to know their new commander and he is trying to solidify his place in the fleet. Language is minimal with nothing over the top. There is tensions registered in interactions and relationship are hinted at but nothing so far going beyond that …so enjoyable reading for those sci-fi geeks looking for good sci-fi military drama and entertainment as a worthwhile way to unplug occasionally.
4. **OCCUPATION: SSG Vanhorn Book 5**, by Toby Neighbors (2021). They have finally have gotten the survivors off Leonis B and they are in the battle group *Reclamation.* But to do that SSG Vanhorn had to stay behind since the Orcs were hot on their tail. Lt. Holly got everyone off except Van and Mook and Van was okay with being alone for now on this planet and keeping a watch on the Orc in Havvar. Since before being stranded on this planet he was being relegated to logistics because his marine jacket said he was unfit for TAC duties he is now almost happy to be operating at the level that he has been for months having personally killed at least 1000 Orcs himself. So here he is with Mook occupying this planet doing over watch. Then comes the orders from a space Admiral that has no idea what he is doing to try to take back Havvar but is unwilling to send any Marines down to help even the TAC guys. Over watch is not good enough, they expect him to rid the planet of the 500 or so Orrkasi that are left in residence in Havvar. Can he do it? We have seen (sic read) him do even more with very little so with the supplies that the battle group had sent down for the survivors he sets out to complete his mission or die trying because that iis what TAC Marines do! Question is will the Orrkasi come back and will they want to set up shop again on this planet? And then…SPOILER ALERT…there is the original inhabitants of this planet that had cut Havvar out of the rocks who show up. What happens with them? Will they get in the way or be a bigger problem than the Orcs? This is all good stuff with a lot of excitement with many twists and turns you don’t see coming…especially from his own people. This 5th book is yet another great installment in this series. Now on to **EXTRACTION**, book 6.
5. **A GUIDE TO FERVENT PRAYER,** by A. W. Pink. (digitally from Monergism 2022). Arthur Walkington Pink was a staunch Calvinist and neo-Puritan of the early to mid-20th Century. This was the era of Critical Biblical thinking where there were more opposing views to the Bible than at any other time in the 20th Century. He says in the introduction, *“In Scripture, prayer includes much more than merely making known our requests to God. We need to be reminded of this. Moreover, we believers need to be instructed in all aspects of prayer in an age characterized by superficiality and ignorance of God-revealed religion. A key Scripture that presents to us the privilege of spreading our needs before the Lord emphasizes this very thing: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6, ital. mine). Unless we express gratitude for mercies already received and give thanks to our Father for His granting us the continued favor of petitioning Him, how can we expect to obtain His ear and thus to receive answers of peace? Yet prayer, in its highest and fullest sense, rises above thanksgiving for gifts vouchsafed: the heart is drawn out in contemplating the Giver Himself, so that the soul is prostrated before Him in worship and adoration.”* Pink shines in the midst of so much darkness coming from the “Church”. This book analyzes some of the Apostolic prayers of the New Testament…usually considered doxologies. He painstakingly exposits these texts so that His audience can actually “see” the truths deposited therein by God through the Apostles. These are rich studies in the life of prayer and hos the disciple of Christ ought to seek after the Lord daily. From the “prayer” of Hebrews 13:20, 2, he says, *“The measure of God's peace that they enjoy is determined by the extent to which they are obedient to God, for piety and peace are inseparable. The intimate connection there is between the peace of God and the sanctifying of believers appears both in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and here in Hebrews 13:20, 21. For in each passage request is made for the promotion of practical holiness, and in each the "God of peace" is supplicated.”* On the “prayer” of 1 Peter 1:3-5, he says, *“We have received abundant grace up until now; we have made great drafts upon the treasury of God, and of His fullness have all we received grace for grace. Where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. . . Everything in God is on a grand scale. Great power-He shakes the world. Great wisdom-He balances the clouds. His mercy is commensurate with His other attributes: it is Godlike mercy, infinite mercy! You must measure His Godhead before you can compute His mercy. Well may it be called "abundant" if it be infinite. It will always be abundant, for all that can be drawn from it will be but as the drop of a bucket to the sea itself. The mercy which deals with us is not man's mercy, but God's mercy, and therefore boundless mercy.”* And one more point from the “prayer” of Jude 24, 25 *“Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23, ital. mine), for if your affections wane, your communion with Him will deteriorate and your witness for Him will be marred. Only as you keep yourselves in the love of God will you be distinguished from the carnal professors all around you. This exhortation is no needless one. The Christian is living in a world whose icy blasts will soon chill his love for God unless he guards it as the apple of his eye. A malicious adversary will do all he can to pour cold water upon it. Remember the solemn warning of Revelation 2:4. Oh, that Christ may never have to complain of you or me, "I have somewhat against you..”* There are great affirmations toward prayer found in the 300 plus page book that we need to read again.
6. **EXTRACTION: SSG Vanhorn Book 6**, by Toby Neighbors (2021). They have finally found some peace on Leonis B, but then the Orrkasi return with a vengeance and take over space and seek to take over the planet again. But fast thinking and good training enables SSG Van Horn and his small band of Marines and military techs to actually put up a defense that eventually goes on offense after the Fleet exited the system leaving them there to fend for themselves. They had met with another alien force who actually own the planet but they are a non-aggressive kind of people unless they find you unworthy and then they blast you to atoms as they did to high ranking officers who try to meet with them. The Alethians are a strange people even for pacifists…and after Havvar falls they are left in small number when they refused to leave the city with Van and the people from the *Rihla.* Once Van and Holly decide to go on the offensive the Alethians allowed them to use a space worthy shuttle to mount a laser on and they took out 4 or 5 ships in space mainly because Van new where to shoot which caused the power source from the planet, which is highly unstable, to explode in a sub nuclear explosion taking out ship after ship. Extraction from the system and the planet was complete. Arriving back on the planet life begins to settle down for Van and Holly until a new fleet arrives and lauds everyone’s accomplishments to a certain degree except for Van is left behind and not given a choice even though he almost singlehandedly saved them all and the planet from the Orcs. But the major had run the last time because he is that kind of guy and he didn’t want Van anywhere near where he might tell others of his cowardice. But Van likes Leonis B so it isn’t an exile...its home…one he is willing to defend when the Orcs return. This ends the SSG Vanhorn series…now I will pick back up the GSG Vanhorn trilogy. The first one **RECALL** was read last year before I knew about the SSG series.
7. **TRAITOR: Pre-prequel to the Ixan Legacy Trilogy,** by Scott Bartlett (2016). In this volume we get the meet Warren Husher before the end of the 1st Galactic Wars as they are encountering the enemy with battles with war ships and fighters…old and new classifications so that they can get an upper hand on the Gok and some super AI entity that shapes the Ixan Alliance. This war continues to rage and it becomes evident that it is not going to end well for the humans and their allies so a plan is devised to seek peace. Husher and the *Hornet* are dispatched to the part of space occupied by the Ixa and what happens there is a mystery. Captain Husher is told that he must come to the ship of his arch enemy to meet and discuss with the main leader and after too much time has taken place all of a sudden a call comes to the *Hornet* from Husher telling them to leave without him as he is finally home with “his” race and that if they don’t leave he will personally blow them out of the sky. But was that Husher? What kind of technology is available that could mimic a person so well…or is it available? Is Captain Husher a traitor? To his crew it seem unlikely. His love for his family is so well known and appreciated…then there was the lack of any mention of a side operation to rescue a scientist that had technology that could turn the war and as we saw in the review above **CAPTAIN AND COMMAND**  the war was won for the moment anyway. Also, as the book comes to an end we see Husher in a cell knowing what has transpired knowing he is not a traitor…wondering about his family and how they will survive his being classified as a traitor. We saw this in the last book as an appropriate understanding of how Warren Husher’s story sadly ended, *Warren Husher had been captured during that conflict, and framed as a traitor by the enemy. When he regained his freedom during the Second Galactic War, his own species had executed him—only to learn that they had Warren to thank for their survival.*  Since it was his idea to go after the scientist that would eventually give the IGF the necessary advantage to win the 2nd Galactic War.
8. **EVADE:GSG Vanhorn Series Book 2** by Toby Neighbors (2022). Well, Van Horn and his side kick/girlfriend wannabe Trix are still on Okkarron, the home world of the Orrkasi, with Lt. Matheson still on his case. When he actually returns with more rescued hostages, from a mission that the Lt. sent him on that would be a one way mission, the Lt. is dismayed and angry. Because he is still hyped up on a drug that gives you super strength but at the same time messes with your ability to think clearly and on top of that it is highly addictive…so with stores running low he send Vanhorn out again to evade the enemy and keep them too busy to look for his platoon and the hostages that Vanhorn had rescued in the first book and the ones he just got back with. This time 2nd and 3rd platoon wants to go along since living in the same area with Lt. Matheson and his prized first platoon who are also all strung out on the drug is hell on earth for them. So they set off to find the bone temple the last of the sacred areas on this planet that hadn’t been destroyed though Van had done his best the last time he was there being held captive. Along the way one of the guys from 2nd platoon tells him of a stashed radio along the way so they get that and radio LT. Holly in space to find out when a rescue would come for them and the hostages as Lt. Matheson had told Van it rescue was eminent. Lt. Holly said that there were 30 Orc ships in orbit and that there would be no rescue anytime soon. So they were off to destroy and wreak havoc. And as they were headed that way they came across a bone walker with many more slaves in it so they “liberated” the bone-walker and slaves from the Orcs because that is what TAC Marines do. They also discovered something interesting in that one or two of the slave actually new some of the Ork’s language which would be highly helpful to getting off the planet because of the need to be able to decipher the Orc’s weird language. So many battles…so many dead Orks and Marines and now as they are resting up as there latest battle the Orcs do something surprising and horrifying but they take it all in stride saying, “*‘What are we going to do now?’ Sadya asked. ‘What we always do,’ I said. ‘What we’ve trained our whole careers to do. We’ll adapt to the change, improvise new ways to kill the Orrkasi, and overcome whatever they throw at us.’ ‘Now you’re talking, Gunny,’ Payton said. ‘Some things never change,’ Trix said. ‘Cho!’ Jex yipped. ‘Grek!’ ‘That’s right,’ I said, ‘we’re going to fight. And we’ll keep on fighting for as long as it takes. Who’s with me?’ ‘I’m in,’ Payton said. ‘Me too,’ Sadya added. ‘Just give the word, Gunny,’ Heather said. “I’m with you,” Ivan said. “If you’ll have me.” “Absolutely,” I said, looking at Trix. ‘What do you say?’ ‘Front toward the enemy,’ she said. ‘Isn’t that what the special operators used to say?’ ‘It is,’ I replied. ‘Then let’s do it,’ Trix told me. ‘Everything else can wait.’ I hoped she meant that. I hoped that what I wanted, and what she had suggested, could wait. I hoped we would survive long enough to make it happen. The odds were against us, but that was nothing new. The Orcs had come home looking for a fight, and I was determined to give them one.”* Next up **ASSAULT**, the conclusion to the Vanhorn series.
9. **THE IRON DICE (Breach of Faith Book 7)** by Daniel Gibbs, Gary T. Stevens (2022). Again another well written book that makes the transition between faith and sci-fi seem seamless, for if any of this were true both faith and action would intertwine as it has for all ages past. In this last book in the series we find Admiral Henry of the Independent Systems Federation right where we left him in the last book **FORTUNE’S FAVOR** with war looming with the Jalm’tar and a galactic alliance conference in limbo at best…stalled is more like it. But there is talk from within the Jalm’tar Empire that the new emperor has aspirations that stretch to the whole galaxy…and with fortune’s favor he will have it…but all of it rest on the throw of the Iron Dice that speaks for fortune. When the news comes that the Jalm’tar are making incursions into the Sagittarius Arm of the galaxy it is all hands on deck including the *Venture Star* and most of Henry’s old crew with a few new ones scattered in for good measure. To make this war stop before it even begins a wild plan is derived between the ISF and a couple of Jalm’tar refugees to deliver to the empire the true emperor…but of course everything will depend on the roll of the iron dice which requires getting the man who would be Emperor to his home planet from his exile to challenge his uncle for the throne. That is the *Venture Star’s* job while Henry with the aid of the new alliance does a sneak attack to help make that happen…but, of course, all of that is dependent upon the roll of the dice…or as far as Henry is concerned God’s providence…and he believes God is more powerful that a couple of pieces of a meteor shaped into dice that are rolled to determine success. There are many battles in space in this one…great battles. A lot of intrigue and some sorrow as old and new friends are laid to rest all to stop a war before it begins. While this one was a bit slower because of all the discussions concerning the alliance it is one of the best in the end and an appropriate ending to a good series. (For information on the other books in this series see 2022 Pastor’s reading list)
10. **TO RESCUE THE REPUBLIC**, by Bret Baier (Copyright © 2021). This was a well written account of the man who almost singlehandedly saved the Union twice. The very best accounting of the life and exploits of Ulysses S. Grant is from his own memoirs to be sure.(You can see the review of these in the 2020 pastor’s reading list #47.) But taking this wonderful and almost exhaustive resource as well as other good and helpful resources along the way He has presented us with a composite of the true man who sought he preservation of the Union, the ending of all types of slavery as well as w desired reconstruction that would see all men as one. Understandably the latter one had its ups and down during the 8 years of his presidency. Bret’s account captures the humble but certain man that sat in the White House at a time of great conflict that could have sent us into civil war at anytime. One statement seems to sum up grant even by a man not taken with the great general*, “Perhaps he was trying to find an excuse, or perhaps by admitting his flaws he was exhibiting a quality of humility that demonstrated strength of character. James A. Garfield recognized a deeper truth about Grant. No fan of the general, Garfield now looked at the receding figure with fresh appreciation. In the viper pit of Washington politics, Grant remained unique. Garfield wrote, ‘No American has carried greater fame out of the White House than this silent man who leaves it today.’”* His resolve and his actions mostly preserved the union and made life better for the people of color in this nation. Some of the best work with the American Indian was done by him; though Congress didn’t see it his way at all. Grant was surrounded by scandals though none of them were directly attributed to Pres. Grant. His one main fault was trusting people. His loyalties got him into a lot of problems especially after the war where most of the money he had was lost in a scheme by friends that ended up defrauding him and many others of all their money. To the question of who wrote the Memoirs, he lets those who knew best speak, *“Over the meal, Gilder could not contain his enthusiasm at having scored a real literary coup for Century. General Grant was in the process of writing three—possibly four—war articles for the magazine. Nothing could be a bigger draw than a firsthand account of the war by its top general. According to Gilder, Grant was thrilled at the opportunity. He needed the money and was delighted to accept a payment of $ 500 for each article. Twain left the dinner fuming. Five hundred dollars! He was appalled by the meager amount of the fee and saw it as a scandalous treatment of a hero. It was, he wrote in his diary, ‘not only the monumental injustice of the nineteenth century, but of all centuries.’ And Twain believed that Gilder knew it as well as he did. There was speculation that Mark Twain was the author of Grant’s memoirs, but Twain debunked those suspicions by stating that he’d barely edited them except for form. Reading the Memoirs, it is Grant’s voice one hears—unadorned, dispassionate, with none of the grandiosity with which great generals tend to embellish their stories.”* Bret’s work sits right there beside the Memoirs and I believe the old General would appreciate his work.
11. **COURAGE, COMMITMENT, FAITH: Tales from the Coalition Defense Force, Vol. 1,** by Daniel Gibbs, Gary Stevens, Steve Rzasa, Joel Steudler (2022-2023). Another excellent read. Daniel and his co-writers bring back the best of the best found in his **BATTLE GROUP Z** series and his **BREACH OF FAITH** series...even introducing a new character along the way. It was great to see Kenneth Lowe again…a respectable and honorable arms contractor something that is not seen or heard of in the Coalition. We get to see He is one of my favorite secondary characters and to see his back story was extremely insightful. To take a glimpse back into Lt. Jackson Adams career as a “spy”…”spook” was great as well. These are characters that we will finish up the two series along with **ECHOES OF WAR** wanting more of…and here is a bit more. Seeing a little of what happens to Felix right after the fiasco with his close friend James Henry, the Main character in **THE BREACH OF FAITH** series, helps the readers of this story to learn abit more concerning the chip on His shoulder and then his passage from the CDF into CDI Coalition Defense Intelligence. Next we meet a Morton Bradley, if he was mentioned anywhere in any of the books I missed it because his character is not memorable and so is the story. It could have been…a sci-fi author, wanna be, seeking a legend that could give him a good story to launch his career who gets caught up in a whole lot more than he could even imagine. The story is not developed well and left many things hanging…maybe purposefully. But then we end the book with a favorite from the Zvika Greengold of Justin Spencer’s days from the original series…one Capt. Devora Feldstein and the Red Tails squadron. She had been Justin wingman and she also loved Justin though His heart was elsewhere. She was a strong sub=character and it is good to see more of her and the Red Tails in action against the League of Sol. Over all a good attempt at an anthology of old and new characters that will support and add depth to the original series.
12. **ASSUALT:GSG VANHORN SERIES BOOK 3,** by Toby Neighbors (2022). This is the Orcs home world and they are not prepared to give it up…at all. And the Gunny and his crew are not willing to become slaves or worse. So they take the fight to the Orcs again even with the knowledge that the fleet is probably not coming and that they may die to protect the refugees that they have rescued…which was the original mission which then became a mission to evade after the Fleet left them there*. “We’ll live to fight another day, Mac. Trust me, we’ve got this. ‘If you say so,’ he replied. ‘At times, the better part of valor is discretion’, I said. It was just one of many axioms that had proven true in my many engagements with the Orrkasi. They were a dreadful enemy, and while, like Payton, I would have preferred to meet them head-on in battle, we were outnumbered and far outgunned. It was better to survive this recon op and fight them another time when the odds were in our favor than to throw our lives away unnecessarily.”* though by now it seems that there had been more to it given how much was retracted and crossed through from Vanhorn’s record along with half of his team. Leonis B was a nightmare in many ways politically for the Fleet and it weren’t hurt if the information just became things of legend without those who lived it living to tell any different. Even with all his injuries from past engagements Vanhorn understand himself through and through and knows he is the man for the job of hurting the Orc until the Fleet does come…if ever. And if the Fleet doesn’t come the Orc will wish they had never dealt with this TAC Marine, *“The Orrkasi were savages, but at times I was worse. I’ve been told that everyone was good at something, but the only thing I ever felt I had a talent for was killing. There were times when I was ashamed of my skill and times when I relished in it.”* Fighting the Orcs becomes extreme while at the same time trying to safe the refugees. His feeling for Trix and for Commander Holly keep getting thrown in the mix until at last he makes his choice for Trix. They survived and are on their way home…or are they…they must go and see the Admiral first and no one knows what that will mean. This ended a great series. I can only hope Toby brings this character back.
13. **VIETNAM: THE MEMOIR OF A SANDLOT SOLDIER,** by W. Thomas Burns (2022). These Memoirs of soldiers and Marines give me a better glimpse into a War that my dad wouldn’t talk about when he came back till the time of his death. These memoirs are better written than most of the “histories” that have been produced. Something about getting accounts straight from the horse’s mouth, as they say. The graphic memories these guys have 50 years later always enables me to know that they saw much more but this s all they can share. The horrors and the comradery of war keep these memories alive for so long. The author ponders this as well, *“I have, over these many years, often wondered how it was possible for so many sandlot soldiers to have survived their experiences in Vietnam. The only explanation I can come up with is that we must have had angels riding on our shoulders. During the years of the war, 2.7 million Americans served in Vietnam. More than fifty-eight thousand courageous young patriots were killed in action. More than three hundred thousand U.S. military personnel were wounded, many of whom returned home with physical challenges and the difficulties of coping with the memories of the war. Challenges that were not unlike those faced by all of the brave men and women who have fought our country’s battles”.* My dad was in country about the same time but as an Army NCO while our author is a Marine. “*The four companies of the Second Battalion 4th Marine Regiment had been sweeping on their own in certain designated areas within the mountains and were now closing in on the enemy’s well-camouflaged and fortified positions. Fox Company was reportedly taking heavy small arms fire and Hotel Company was immediately dispatched to reinforce the Marines of Fox. The men of Golf Company (the authors group)were making their way through the treacherous mountain terrain in order to assist their fellow Marines in the combat that lay ahead.”* Books like these are important so these men and women who fight our wars are not forgotten.
14. **THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH: WHICH IS IT?** by Thomas Witherow (first publish 1856 and republish continuously since). Once more unto the breech of leadership training. When it comes to a book that absolutely settles the most appropriate biblical and apostolic church polity…this is it. Short and sweet! (Well, not so sweet…but short, to the point and proves his point.) The axiom of this entire book is this: “*The modern church which embodies in its government most apostolic principles, comes nearest in it government to the Apostolic Church.”* He states *“I wrote this little book for the Presbyterian people…so that you may know the Scriptural grounds on which the Presbyterian form of Church government rests, and how its claim to apostolicity are so far superior to those of any rival systems.”* He then sets out to systematically study the prelacy/hierarchical, the independency/congregational and the Presbyterian form almost exhaustively in this little booklet proving beyond the shadow of a doubt the Presbyterianism is the Apostolic Church. And it is here that God’s people would best grow and be His peculiar people, zealous for good works. He look long and hard at church offices and contrasts these with what often is passed off as biblical equivalents and they are found wanting. His definitions are simple and profound and his argument is simple but made profound because of the weight of the Scriptural references to support his simple argument. I will use it for years to come.
15. **PROFITING FROM THE WORD,** by A.W. Pink(1886-1952) (first published-1930-32, monergism digital form 2021). **Profiting from the Word** was originally published as a series of related articles in *Studies in the Scriptures* from 1930-1932. *“All Scripture,”* we are told in 2 Timothy 3:16, *“is profitable,”* but how much do we gain from our reading of Scripture, and by what means can we learn to profit more? Pink’s assertion that people DON”T profit as much as they should in his day (early 1900’s) from the Word sounds very familiar for our day. *“There is grave reason to believe that much Bible reading and Bible study of the last few years has been of no spiritual profit to those who engaged in it. Yea, we go further; we greatly fear that in many instances it has proved a curse rather than a blessing. This is strong language, we are well aware, yet no stronger than the case calls for. Divine gifts may be misused, and Divine mercies abused. That this has been so in the present instance is evident by the fruits produced. Even the natural man may (and often does) take up the study of the Scriptures with the same enthusiasm and pleasure as he might of the sciences. Where this is the case, his store of knowledge is increased, and so also is his pride. Like a chemist engaged in making interesting experiments, the intellectual searcher of the Word is quite elated when he makes some discovery in it; but the joy of the latter is no more spiritual than would be that of the former.”* Some fundamental questions provide the theme for this book. Both readable and immensely practical, it has all the characteristics which have led to Pink’s recognition as one of the finest Christian writers of the twentieth century. It is a help to Christians young and old. Given the earlier presupposition about the church and it lack, he exposits the following 10 subjects; the Scriptures and Sin, the Scriptures and God, the Scriptures and Christ, the Scriptures and Prayer, the Scriptures and Good Works, the Scriptures and Obedience, the Scriptures and the World, the Scriptures and the Promises, the Scriptures and Joy, the Scriptures and Love. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to the relationship between Scripture and various topics of the Bible. Pink then provides seven main points for each chapter, which illustrate either how the Word profits one’s reading, or what must be done in the life of a believer for the Word to profit him. Pink lays out many principles by which we may know and confirm that our study of Scripture has profited us. These principles are simultaneously convicting because they show how and where we have fallen short. Rather than leaving the reader convicted to "do better," Pink gives practical and biblical steps we can take to make progress forward in those areas.
16. **THE BIBLE AND THE CLOSET: Or, How We May Read the Scriptures with the Most Spiritual Profit along with SECRET PRAYER SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED,**  by Reverends Thomas Watson and Samuel Lee (originally published combined in 1842 reprinted digitally by Monergism 2022). It is interesting that in the preface/introduction letter to this volume the Reverends Jonathan Overton Choules and E.N. Kirk who originally edited this begins by bemoaning how in less than 100 years these powerful Puritans have come under skepticism and are not being read. But at the same time commending their works to a weak and listing church that needs righting and strength. So he edited these two works by separate Puritan pastors of the day so that we could “at a glance” see how they saw Scripture and the power of secret prayer …or praying in private. Watson always quick to the point says this about the origin and veracity of the Scriptures. *“From where would the Scriptures come, if not from God? 1. Sinners could not be the authors of Scripture. Would they indite11 such holy lines, or inveigh so fiercely against the sins which they love? 2. Saints could not be the authors of Scripture; how could it stand with their sanctity to counterfeit God’s name, and put “thus says the Lord,” to a book of their own devising? 3. Angels could not be the authors of Scripture. What angel in heaven dares impersonate God, and say, ‘I am the Lord?’ Believe that the pedigree of Scripture is sacred, and that it comes from the Father of light. The antiquity of Scripture speaks its divinity. No extant human history reaches further than Noah’s flood; but the Scripture addresses things before time. Besides that, the majesty, profundity, purity and harmony of Scripture, show it could be breathed from none but God himself …* *Psalm 19.7: “The law of the Lord is perfect.” The Scripture is the library of the Holy Ghost; it is a code of divine knowledge, an exact model and platform of religion. The Scripture contains in it the* ***Credenda****, the things which we are to believe, and the* ***Agenda,*** *the things which we are to practise; it is able to make us wise unto salvation. 2Tim. 3.15. The Scripture is the standard of truth, the judge of controversy; it is the pole star to direct us to heaven. The Scripture is the compass by which the rudder of our will is to be steered; it is the field in which Christ, the pearl of price, is hidden; it is a rock of diamond. The leaves of Scripture are like “the leaves of the tree of life for the healing of the nations.” Rev. 22.2. The Scripture is the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the convert born, but by 29 “the word of truth?” James 1.18. How does he grow but by “the sincere milk of the word?” 1Peter 2.2. The written word is the book out of which our evidences for heaven are fetched; it is the sea-mark14 which shows us the rocks of sin; it is the antidote against error and apostasy; the two-edged sword which wounds the old serpent. It is our bulwark to withstand the force of lust, like the Capitol at Rome, which was a place of strength and ammunition.”* Of course after he makes this case he then makes a case for private meditation on this wonderful truth, which makes up the rest of the book. As for Lees book, this is all about affirming the using the Scriptures in our private prayer closet and how this will aid in our ability to grow in grace. He states, ***“But when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret, shall reward you openly.” — Matt. 6.6.*** *We have here our blessed Lord’s instructions for the management of secret prayer, the crown and glory of a child of God… The reasons why secret prayer is the mark of a sincere heart, are as follows: 1. Because a sincere heart busies itself about heart work, to mortify sin, to quicken grace, to observe and resist temptation, to secure and advance his evidences; therefore it is very conversant with secret prayer. The glory of the king’s daughter shines within, arrayed with clothes of gold,* ***Ps 45.11-13*** *but they are the spangled and glittering hangings of the closet of her heart when she entertains communion with her Lord. Prayer is the soul’s colloquy with God, and secret prayer is a conference with God upon admission into the privy chamber of heaven. When you have shut your own closet, when God and your soul are alone, with this key you open the chambers of paradise, and enter the closet of divine love. When you are immured as in a curious labyrinth, apart from the tumultuous world, and entered into that garden of Lebanon in the midst of your closet; your soul, like a spiritual Daedalus, takes to itself the wings of faith and prayer, and flies into the midst of heaven, among the cherubims. I may call secret prayer the invisible flight of the soul into the bosom of God; out of this heavenly closet rises Jacob’s ladder, whose rounds are all of light; its foot stands upon the basis of the Covenant in your heart, its top reaches the throne of grace.”* This combined work needs to be a regular reading for anyone who is wanting a refresher on these subjects from those who made it their life’s habit to do these things.
17. **ROGUE SOLDIER: One Man's War** by Michael Putzel (2021). This is a story about Stagg Sergeant Ed Keith, a man from first appearance would be the last man that you would want beside you in battle. He was extremely slim, dark-haired youth man with glasses as thick as Coke bottle bottoms and he wore Special Forces “tiger suit” fatigues. But upon further review of his person you would see that he was with special forces Green Berets and he had the old man’s permission to fly with the helicopter crews like C Troop, 2nd of 17th Calvary, 101st Airborne Division…at least that is what they were told. He was an anomaly in a war full of unexplainable occurrences. He had come to Vietnam by way of the Intelligence Corps and when He found out he was especially good at spotting enemy emplacements from 3-5000 feet in the air he linked up with a master Sergeant that loaded him up in a helo and allowed him to save hundreds of lives...all of this just “outside” the chain of command. he saw this as a calling and a gift to the war. He did this for over a year until he was shot up himself …the story is told by the author with great detail along with his recovery. The author is known for his accuracy in writing. Michael Putzel is a distinguished American journalist who covered the war in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos for two-and-a-half years as a war correspondent for The Associated Press. From the Civil Rights Movement and the Watergate scandal that brought down Richard Nixon, to the White House under Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton and the collapse of Soviet Communism from Moscow, he reported many of the biggest news stories of his generation. He witnessed the shooting of President Reagan, served as Washington bureau chief of The Boston Globe, and wrote a widely published weekly column on how technology has changed people’s lives. His first book, **The Price They Paid: Enduring Wounds of War,** was published in 2015. **Rogue Soldier: One Man’s War** was published in 2021. But later when the war was over some of his comrades in the 101st sought a silver medal for his actions he was denied over and over again. Years later, even after some of the guys who had pushing the Star were dead themselves, the author put in a request for its status and was told by the staff of Congressman Kevin McCarthy’s concerning the effort to get Keith the Silver Star, said she couldn’t discuss the case due to the Privacy Act, but she confirmed that the matter “is not still active.” Staff Sergeant Keith never got the Silver Star. Yet another casualty of a war everyone wants to forget. Great story…a reminder of the cost of so many.
18. **A STRING OF PEARLS: The Best Things Reserved Until Last**, by Thomas Brooks (1657). This is an interesting read…and a long sermon. (90-115 pages depending upon formatting). This sermon was preached in London, June 8, 1657, at the funeral of Mrs. Mary Blake by Thomas Brooks, *“her much endeared friend, spiritual father, pastor, and brother, in the fellowship of the Gospel.”* (to use his own words). Brooks starts telling us what his sermon is about. *“That God reserves the best and greatest favors and blessings for believers till they come to heaven".* The highest blessings of God are ours-but they haven't been given entirely to us yet. He continues, *“They are ours by promise and the promise cannot fail. We have pinches of them in this life, but that is all we have-pinches, traces, small fractions of them. This shows how magnificent heaven must be. To think that the forgiveness of sin is only a grain of sand in the beach of God's favor! What the Persian king said to Haman can be applied to the Lord and His favorites:* ***‘What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?’*** *There's no telling…for it is God doing the honors! What sort of heaven is God not able to make? He can make a heaven worthy of His majesty and His good will toward us. And that's precisely what He has done! We don't have our hands of it yet, but we have it in trust.”* The sermon is built around the text from **I Peter 1:4, *“An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.”*** He is constantly reminding us what we are to live for in this life…for God and the inheritance He has promise which certainly will come. That we understanding the nature of God as his children we can’t not but look to the Day of His total an absolute provision. He says, *“Ah, Christians! you are too great, and born to greater things—than that you should be slaves to your bodies, or slaves to your lusts, or slaves to the world! Can you seriously consider of the great things which are reserved in heaven for you, and not set your feet upon those things that the men of the world set their hearts upon? Can you look up to your future glory, and not blush to be taken with the glory of this world? Alexander the Great said to one of his captains who was named Alexander, Remember the name of Alexander, and see that you do nothing unworthy of the name of Alexander. So say I, Remember, O Christian your name; remember your dignity and glory, and see that you do nothing unworthy of the one or the other.”* His theology is impeccable but I say that last two section of the sermon are some of the best material ever written so that we as Christian will not be discouraged in this life…he answers the question: *Why God reserves the best blessings for believers until they come to heaven?* And then he gives us20 motives for Christians to be willing to die when it is our time.
19. **THE GAUNTLET: Ixan Prophesies Prequel Novel**, by Scott Bartlett (2022). This particular prequel deals with the events before the book **SUPERCARRIER** by the same author. As in the **TRAITOR** (see above review #13) we get a look at the son of Warren Husher who was as disgraced and died a traitor of the UHF even though he wasn’t. 20 years or so later we meet his son Vin Husher again and he is captaining his first ship the *Firedrake* investigating why the Wingers (an avian alien race) is pirating freely against UHF civilian freighters and what they are trying to hide. Well, Husher is sent to figure out what is going on when a run in with a Winger pirate goes wrong and they stumble into more than they had expected though it seems not more than his superiors expected. Well, after declining a direct order which would have killed unarmed Wingers he is sent back to be court-martialed and then placed on the *Providence*...which is where the book **SUPERCARRIER** begins with a Lt. Vin Husher being placed under the command of a Captain Keyes who was a personal friend of Husher’s father years ago. There is much afoot between some Admirals and Darkstream Corp. and we pick up the conspiracy in **SUPERCARRIER** which I am reading right now. I really like these characters unlike other books by this author and am looking forward to finishing this series.
20. **SUPERCARRIER: The Ixan Prophesies Trilogy Book 1,** by Scott Bartlett (2016). This was a great read…real intrigue as the powers that be seek to continue profiting off the war machine by engineering a war so that Darkstream Corp. can continue its prophets. Captain Keyes is commanding the UHS *Providence* a supercarrier from days gone by that had been ungraded for show more than anything else. But it doesn’t have “dark tech” …a technology that humanity has withheld from the rest of the galaxy for their own advancement. Now the ol’ girl is what stands between humanity destroying itself and the Ixa Empire controlling the galaxy. The greater threat to humanity Darkstream or the Ixa…it is a toss-up at the moment. Darkstream Ochrim and the Admirals stand opposed to Keyes, his ship and his crew…and for now that is okay with keys who doesn’t like any of these folks anyway. Keyes is a smart Captain and he has foreseen the tensions among old allies and as dark tech fails…it seems his predictions have come true about the alliances not holding. But in the background is the Ixan prophesies which seem to be coming true one by one which would mean the end of civilization as humans understand it. As always, the fate of the galaxy depends on the actions of the Providence, her Captain and crew…so what will happen? There are enough “jump scenes” or scenes you didn’t see coming to keep you…well, me…wanting more of these characters and this action. On to book 2 **JUGGERNAUGHT.**
21. **THE PURSUIT OF GOD**: **There is the Spiritual Secret Relationship of a Christian with God,** by A W Tozer (1948 and published multiple times after through the years). This is one of those classic Christian books that speak to every generation. A.W. Tozer (1897-1963) speaks for the common man in so many ways…but mostly he speaks our language putting biblical doctrine in such common language that we cannot NOT understand it. *“We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit.”* This is his way of describing God’s irresistible grace without alienating the on-Calvinists of his time. He says of his own work, *“This book is a modest attempt to aid God's hungry children so to find Him. Nothing here is new except in the sense that it is a discovery which my own heart has made of spiritual realities most delightful and wonderful to me. Others before me have gone much farther into these holy mysteries than I have done, but if my fire is not large it is yet real, and there may be those who can light their candle at its flame.”* Then there is this, when talking of evangelicalism in his day, *“Complacency (a dreadful sin of his time and ours as well) is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.”* (For as he says later, we are saved and will get in as Paul talks about to the Corinthians but just barely as in we will wonder why we do not experience the graces of God in our lives as others do and it is because of this complacency. It is interesting how the Church seems to maintain some of the same sins throughout the ages. He continues his critique of evangelicalism which sounds a lot like today, *“But this hunger must be recognized by our religious leaders. Current evangelicalism has (to change the figure) laid the altar and divided the sacrifice into parts, but now seems satisfied to count the stones and rearrange the pieces with never a care that there is not a sign of fire upon the top of lofty Carmel. But God be thanked that there are a few who care. They are those who, while they love the altar and delight in the sacrifice, are yet unable to reconcile themselves to the continued absence of fire. They desire God above all. They are athirst to taste for themselves the ‘piercing sweetness’ of the love of Christ about Whom all the holy prophets did write and the psalmists did sing. There is today no lack of Bible teachers to set forth correctly the principles of the doctrines of Christ, but too many of these seem satisfied to teach the fundamentals of the faith year after year, strangely unaware that there is in their ministry no manifest Presence, nor anything unusual in their personal lives. They minister constantly to believers who feel within their breasts a longing which their teaching simply does not satisfy.”* Samuel M. Zwemer, an American missionary to Islam, wrote concerning this book, *“The ten chapters are heart searching and the prayers at the close of each are for closet, not pulpit. I felt the nearness of God while reading them. Here is a book for every pastor, missionary, and devout Christian. It deals with the deep things of God and the riches of His grace. Above all, it has the keynote of sincerity and humility.”* Again with simplicity he makes his points, *“God promised much, but He promised no more than He intends to fulfill.”* This book is less than 100 pages depending upon which book you nuy or download and it well worth your time.
22. **STINGERS:VIETNAM WAR- Helicopter Gunships** by Fred Allen(2021). This is an amazing look at an 18 year old Stinger Crew Chief/Door gunner’s perspective of the Vietnam War. *“The passage of time is claiming the Vietnam generation of America’s remaining combat soldiers. May this book help to provide future generations with a unique insight into the Vietnam War. Perhaps history will preserve the memory of the brave young men in helicopter gunships who faced frequent lethal engagements in the service of their Country. This is a graphic account of helicopter gunship operations and life in an active war zone. Some readers may find the content disturbing. You can take the warrior out of the war, but you will never take the war out of the warrior.”* His style of writing is such that his readers come across with such vivid pictures that you almost can see and sense the rage and the determination of killing the enemy and anyone else who is carrying a gun against US forces. *“In late 1970 and early 1971, the Vietnam War was ending. Our Nation was attempting to extricate the warriors without a clear-cut victory. Thousands of American soldiers sacrificed their lives and survivors lost future well-being for a cause without purpose. The ensuing quagmire for the soldiers still fighting, killing, and enduring near-death events, while the troop strength decreased, created a noxious environment.”* Gunship crews were among the most lethal killers in the war but also had the highest mortality rate than any of branch of service. The Stinger were amongst the most decorated in the War. He concludes with this*, “The Young answered the call of duty for their divided country. Their training was sound. The objective was not clear. Their eyes were wide and full of excitement. Most stepped forth with patriotism in their hearts. They did not know the horrors that were to come. They bid farewell to their loved ones as caring Americans. As the world turned against these duty-bound warriors, they soldiered on. Every major battle Americans fought was won. The shadows of men they once were returned home. They sought nurturing and warmth from the bosom of their beloved country. But they were turned away. If our country survives for a thousand years, may we not forget the service of Vietnam veterans. Never again should we send our Young to war in the absence of irrefutable cause and objective. Specialist Fifth Class Fred Allen United States Army 1969—1972”*
23. **THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT,** by W. G. T. Shedd (1886, Monergism digital 2020). William Greenough Thayer Shedd was both a congregational and, later, a Presbyterian pastor. This doctrine is so solemn that man's natural instinct is either to ignore it or deny it. From time to time in the history of the Christian church it comes under concerted attack, as it did during the life of W.G.T. Shedd, the noted nineteenth century theologian and preacher. In this work, Shedd carefully expounds the biblical teaching on divine judgment, and sets it in the context of the history of Christian doctrine. He states, *“The common opinion in the Ancient church was, that the future punishment of the impenitent wicked is endless.”* He deals carefully and cogently with objections to it. Shedd's useful book takes direct aim at the conditional immortality views that are currently disturbing evangelicals. Shedd presents convincing historical, biblical and rational argument. This is a well-reasoned, theologically accurate statement which more than provides adequate coverage of a much neglected aspect of Biblical doctrine. (Though small in size…100 pages or so depending on formatting.) Shedd says that *“The strongest support of the doctrine of endless punishment is the teaching of Christ, the Redeemer of man; without the explicit and reiterated statements of God incarnate, it is doubtful whether so awful a truth would have had such a conspicuous place as it always has had in the creed of Christendom. Christ could not have warned men so frequently and earnestly as he did, had he known there is no future peril.”* Judgment and justice and punishment are of weight and are important matters. Shedd’s book covers the doctrine from one end of the biblical record to the philosophical aspects of the debate; from observing the words used for hell grammatically, to expounding and applying the doctrine practically. His word study on Hell, Sheol and Gehenna are in themselves worth the study of this book. He expounds the teaching on divine judgment and sets it in the context of Christian history as well as the Biblical. He also speaks to the argument concerning the right or wrongness of capital punishment and he makes this interesting statement that I think we miss all too often today, *“It is not true, that the first and principal aim of punishment, in distinction from chastisement, is the protection of society, and the public good. This, like the personal benefit in the preceding case, is only secondary and incidental. The public good is not a sufficient reason for putting a man to death; but the satisfaction of law is. This view of penalty is most disastrous in its influence, as well as false in its ethics.”* This book should have a sobering effect on its readers; but its lasting impression will be to bring us, His people, to an undying gratitude for 'Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. But this book is written to also motivate us to proclaiming the gospel to the lost and dying around us…not that we can affect their salvation but that we need to have a passion given the alternative to see them come to faith. Only God has determined and yet we are commanded to proclaim the truth so that His elect will come in. There is hope in here but unless we think somehow that he is leaning left in his approach to the lost he helps to understand the hard work and sacrifice it takes to “speak the gospel into their lives”, *“The finally lost are not to be conceived of as having faint desires and aspirations for a holy and heavenly state, and as feebly but really inclined to sorrow for their sin, but are kept in hell contrary to their yearning and petition. They are sometimes so described by the opponent of the doctrine, or at least so thought of. There is not a single throb of godly sorrow, or a single pulsation of holy desire, in the lost spirit. The temper toward God in the lost is angry and defiant. ‘They hate both me and my father,’ says the Son of God, ‘without a cause’ (John 15:24, 25). Satan and his followers "’love darkness rather than light,’ hell rather than heaven, ‘because their deeds are evil’ (John 3:19). Sin ultimately assumes a fiendish form, and degree.”* There is much here to keep us on track doctrinally.
24. **THE FREEDOM OF SELF-FORGETFULNESS: THE PATH TO TRUE CHRISTIAN JOY,** by Timothy Keller 2012 and reprinted every year since to 2019). This booklet is an excellent tool for anyone who worries about what other’s think…(do tell?) but also for any of us who worry about conflict more than we should. Rev. Dr. Keller develops this “little” teaching around **I Cor. 3:21- 4:7.** Pride and boasting are the root problem in this text…these 2 are the reason we can’t get along in life…the reason there is little to no peace to be had in the world because they are the root problem they also lead to rot concerning how we are to see ourselves in Christ.  He points out an interesting fact on the way to making his points. *“Up until the 20th Century, traditional cultures (and is still true of most cultures in the world. Is this a basic difference between 1st and 3rd world cultures?)…, has always held that too high a view of yourself was the root cause of all the evil in the world. There actually was answers to these questions: What is the reason for crime and violence in the world? Why are people abused? Why are people cruel? Why do people do the bad things they do? Traditionally the answer was hubria- the Greek word meaning pride or too high a view of yourself. Traditionally, that was the reason given for why people misbehave…But our belief today…and this thinking is embedded in every part of culture…is that people misbehave for lack of self-esteem and because they have too low a view of themselves. For example, husbands beat their wives and people become criminals because they have too low a view of themselves…”* So why not make judgments less for crime since it isn’t their fault. But instead of supporting our modern view, Paul instead speaks the truth in 3 ways (1) Paul shows us the natural condition of the human ego- prideful and boastful; (2) Paul shows us the transformed self, which Paul knew personally, and which is brought about through the gospel; (3) Paul shows us how to understand that transformed sense of self. His overriding point is that they are to stop thinking about self…we are to stop thinking of every experience as it somehow relates to us, hence the freedom of self-forgetfulness. He is able to do this because by the Spirit he has risen above the common misconception of performance dictating the verdict… Instead he says, *“But Paul is saying that in Christianity, the verdict leads to performance. It is not the performance that leads to the verdict. In Christianity, the moment we believe, God says ‘****This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.’*** *Or take* ***Romans 8:1*** *which says ‘****Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’.*** *In Christianity, the moment we believe, God imputes Christ’s perfect performance to us as if it were our own, and adopts us into His family. In other words, God can say to us just as He once said to Christ,* ***‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’***This book can help those who are searching for true meaning in their lives...those whom the Lord is changing and they are trying to figure things out and this book will help the lifelong Christian remember that is not about me…it is about God …and it is about others. This booklet can help the Spirit-led to find our way back to this main point…it is always about God!
25. **CALVIN ON SOVEREIGNTY, PROVIDENCE AND PREDESTINATION,** by Joel R. Beeke (2020 BY Free Grace Press). For those with Kindle Unlimited this is quite a find. This is yet another small book that I have had the pleasure of reading and recommending. I don’t know if this is getting back to an earlier practice to write small treatises for people to get the gist of the main doctrines or if they have men in mind who don’t want to read very long books. Joel Beeke does us a great service by helping us to understand some of Calvin’s teachings on God’s sovereignty, especially in providence and in predestination. Dr. Beeke speaks well to us giving us Calvin’s mind in words that the contemporary person does not have to work at to understand. After quoting Calvin he then proceeds to interpret him in modern language, like this passage, *“Calvin’s teachings on sovereignty and predestination offer us unveiling comfort. Imagine for a moment that God is not sovereign. If God were not sovereign and in control of all things, then the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York City on 9/ 11 was a freak accident and was beyond God’s control. Ditto for the coronavirus of 2020—and for every huge trial you have faced in your life. If God is not sovereign, the powers of evil are stronger than the power of God. If God is not sovereign, all things will not work together for good to those who love God, contrary to what Romans 8: 28 tells us. Do you find that comforting? I sure don’t. For another thing, imagine for a moment that God does not elect sinners to salvation from the masses of humanity. If Romans 3 is right in claiming that man is not basically good but is thoroughly depraved so that he cannot choose good without the grace of God, then no one would ever be saved if God did not elect or choose sinners.”* He also takes the time to further define his words*, “What did Calvin mean by God’s sovereignty? The word sovereignty means ‘rule’; hence, God’s sovereignty means that God rules. God’s sovereignty implies His supremacy, His kingship, and His deity. His sovereignty declares Him to be God, the incomprehensible Trinity who is nevertheless knowable insofar as He chooses to reveal Himself. God’s sovereignty is exercised in all His attributes, declaring Him to be perfect in all respects and possessor of all righteousness and holiness. He is the gracious and omnipotent Jehovah, the Most High who does* ***“his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan. 4: 35)****. God cannot be reduced to special or temporal categories for human understanding and analysis. Calvin believed that God is the Lord of life and Sovereign of the universe whose will is the key to history. Calvin taught that God is free and independent of any force outside Himself to accomplish His purposes; He knows the end from the beginning; He creates, sustains, governs, and directs all things; and His marvelous design will be fully and perfectly manifest at the end of the ages.* ***‘For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever’” (Rom. 11: 36).”*** When he speaks of predestination from the Bible’s and Calvin’s perspective he says**,** *“Predestination from eternity has two parts: first, election, by which God chooses whom He will save. Election is always sovereign and always gracious. No one who makes it to heaven will ever be able to say, ‘I deserve to be here.’ I repeat: Election, then, is always sovereign and gracious. Second, reprobation is always sovereign and always just. No one who enters hell will ever be able to say, ‘I don’t deserve to be here.’ I repeat: Reprobation, then, is always sovereign and just. Reprobation refers to God’s choice from eternity to pass by some people without electing them and to justly condemn them.”* One last thought, *“As Calvin writes, ‘If we have been chosen in Christ, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive of him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election.’ I pray to God that you now understand how Calvin was biblical and got it right when he addressed the doctrines of God’s sovereignty, providence, and predestination (both election and reprobation). I pray, too, that you understand that these doctrines are important for you as well, biblically, doctrinally, experientially, and practically. Thank God for His electing grace.”* Trust me, this little book is worth every moment you will spend reading it!
26. **THE FIVE POINTS OF AMILLENIALLISM** by Jeffery D. Johnson (digitally 2020, Free Grace Press). This is the first book in recent years that I have found a book that teaches what I teach so this is a keeper to be sure…Lol! (You always like to find things that verify your argument.) And way He takes great pains to outline and elucidate his 5 points (1) The redemptive-historical hermeneutic which is probably the weakest one of the 5 since he spends a lot of time trying to contrast this with the historical-grammatical hermeneutic of scripture as in that one is better than the other. Truth is they complement one another.(2) That the true children of Abraham are those who are united to Christ by faith. (3) The kingdom of God is currently spiritual as in the already and not yet. (4) The Promised Land is the New Earth. And (5) the finality of the second coming, in that when Christ comes again it is all over. He has been trained well and he is absolutely convinced of what he says; like, *“We have no problem accepting the prophecies and miracles of the Bible because we believe the Bible is the word of God. Thus, because of inspiration, we have no problem understanding the Old Testament prophesies in light of their New Testament explanations and fulfillments. Because the Bible has a single divine Author, we naturally expect a unified message from start to finish.”* Or, *“Amillennialism is not complex. It’s simply the gospel applied to the history of the world.”* And his rules of interpretation are old but it was his father saying them again that caused them to stay with him, *“My dad suggested I interpret the difficult passages of Scripture in light of the clear and direct passages of Scripture.”* This is an excellent book for anyone wanting to have a clear and concise understanding of this doctrine.
27. **LUKE: PART 3: A STUDY OF LUKE 17-24,**  by Hope Blanton, Christine Gordon (2020). The strength of these books has been more in the reflection questions that they ask than in the commentary that accompanies each section. It is not that they are wrong in some of their conclusions in the commentaries but some of their statements can be a bit misleading, at best. Though taken as a whole, one would have to conclude that their theology is sound and practical and that possibly some of the questionable statements could have happened in editing the book to the size the publisher wanted it to be. Given their desire to make Luke come alive and the types of probing questions that they ask I am willing to give them the benefit of the doubt on this. They seek to help us see the humanity of Christ and His disciples and how they especially His disciples are not so different from us. Talking about the night that Jesus died on the cross they says, *“But this, this was surely the end of their hope. This is so often where we find ourselves, if we’re honest. We have walked with Jesus and have seen his power. But a new loss or a new bout of suffering leaves us in a place that seems to have exhausted all possibility of hope.”* And again, *“Jesus never promised us ease, comfort, or even safety. In fact, sometimes he calls his disciples right into the middle of danger, on purpose. We struggle to trust him in these places, sometimes questioning his goodness or disagreeing with his plan. Peter struggled like this, failed, was restored, and then endured in his faith and therefore was welcomed into the kingdom. Those of us who continue to fail in the midst of suffering, confusion, and pressure but belong to Christ will know final victory and entrance into heaven, no matter who or what comes against us in this life. This is what Jesus was telling his followers even as they anticipated terrible conditions in Jerusalem.”* All throughout these 3 volumes on Luke the authors have sought to bring their audience face to face with our own needs that can only be handled in Christ...the resurrected and glorified Christ.
28. **A TREATISE ON AFFLICTION: Correction, Instruction: or The Rod and the Word,** by Thomas Chase, a Presbyterian pastor well acquainted with suffering (1598-1682) (digitally from Monergism 2019). This work was written while its author was imprisoned in the Tower of London with the likes of Thomas Watson, Christopher Love (who was beheaded) along with others for being perceived as a royalist after Charles I was put to death. He takes many texts for his pints as all other Puritans did, but his main focus is on two **Proverbs 3:11-12- *“My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of His reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom He loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”…***along with the supportive passages from **Hebrews 12:5-11**. ***“Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach out of your law."*** *This being the subject I intend to insist upon, I shall contract it into this doctrinal point of observation, namely: The man whose chastisements are joined with divine teachings, is a blessed man. Or, it is a blessed thing when correction and instruction go together. The rod and the Word make up a complete blessing. I shall take chastisements here in the utmost latitude, for all kinds and degrees of sufferings, whether from God, or man, or Satan; whether sufferings for sin, or sufferings for righteousness' sake****.*** He takes a careful, methodical and compassionate approach towards a subject that needs to be discussed today. He begins by illustrating twenty lessons God teaches his children in affliction. He then proceeds to show the advantages wrought by affliction in the lives of languishing believers. He shows why deliverance from suffering should not necessarily be the believer's primary goal when dark days come, and explains why suffering may sometimes seem to last longer than it should. *“A child of God, for causes which here we cannot mention, may be cast into so deep a state of spiritual desertion for a time, that he may (as the apostle speaks)* ***‘forget that he was purged from his old sins’ (2 Peter 1:9).*** *A child of light may walk in darkness. And though there is no such decay in the new man, wherein both habits and acts cease—yet they may be so stupefied by the impressions of the present temptations, as the poor soul shall be sensible of neither, but reduced as it were into such a state as when grace was but an embryo in the womb—that spiritual life shall be almost extinguished; there may be life, but no sense of that life. More might be added, but I am sensible how this discourse swells beyond the proportion I intended, and therefore I must hasten. Thus much, therefore, for the second thing propounded in the doctrinal part, the nature and properties of divine teaching.* The author shows from Scripture how affliction and instruction go hand-in-hand in the life of the child of God. *“Beloved Christians, if we would prevent the like severity, let us take heed of the like security. God has been a long time scourging England upon Germany's back, and upon Ireland's back, and upon Scotland's back. God has for these many years scourged London on the back of all the cities and countries round about us, and God daily scourges every one of us in particular upon the back of our suffering brethren, in diverse kinds. His design is that we should fear him, that we should receive instruction. If we altogether fail, we may fear the same rods are preparing for our backs, with which they have bled, yes that their rods shall he turned into scorpions to us. We sin worse than others when we sin those very sins for which others have been punished before our faces, and add contempt to their transgressions; and how just will it be with God, if as we aggravate their sins, to aggravate upon us their plagues; that we that would not see and learn, should feel and perish; even particular judgments should be our warnings.”* He can’t get much clearer than that!
29. **SPARTAN COMPANY: An Orion Porter Novel Spartan Company #1,** by Toby Neighbors (2018). Orion Porter finds himself at the mercy of a court system that is overcrowded and shuffling criminals through like pigs to slaughter. He was generally a good kid, with a temper…an average student with a promising football career in high school and beyond… until that fateful night when he lost his temper and nearly killed another young man who had been trying to get him to fight. Choices change lives...and choices always have consequences…are the underwritten themes of this book. Anyway, just like in football since he was “the last one” to throw a punch when the police came he was thrown into jail. Thankfully, the judge saw this situation for what it was but pressed for time and justice gave Orion a choice of jail or the Space Marines. Well, given the name of the book you know which he chose…which was, even with all the hardships he will have to endure, is right where he needed to be. The story takes us through his Space Marine Basic Training (which if you know any Marines was pretty realistic just a different millennium and planet). During basic the Master Sargent (nicknamed “Money”) saw the making of a real Marine in Orry and began to train him accordingly. In one instance The MS decided to train him up way past his pay grade with the latest sniper rifle. *“Come with me, Porter, Money said. Time to introduce you to the Sharpes LRRG. We walked for what seemed like a kilometer at least, before coming to small bay with magnetic shielding over an open hanger door. We were on a small platform, and I could see out into the darkness of space. It felt a little creepy to be that close to hard-vacuum, but I did my best not to seem nervous. The master sergeant showed me the sniper rifle, if it could actually be called a rifle. I had fired railed guns before, but they were closed-barrel weapons. The Sharps Long Range Rail Gun had an open track, which made it lightweight and easier to clean, but also much more fragile than a regular rifle. We took the weapon apart, made a close inspection of the track for any signs of degradation or warping, then checked every electrical connection to ensure that everything was operational. Alright, she’s ready, Money said, setting the gun down on the platform facing the open cargo bay door. Go ahead and dry fire it, just to get a feel for it. I had questions, but firing the weapon would answer them more quickly than I could ask.”* After basic he is chosen for an elite Recon Space marine force…something no one his age and lack of experience had ever accomplished and after helping his company win a Marine Recon Challenge is shipped off to a beautiful planet with 5 species bent on killing on another and anyone that gets in their way all to determine if it has an energy source that the humans need for their further existence. Well, as you image, this “cush” assignment goes off the rails with a gung-ho LT. that is only concerned with fame and promotion even before they get out of the gate. This planet for all its beauty would kill but the mission…which kept changing because of the LT’s fears was to get a sample of this substance and that is just what Orion Porter was gonna do since good Marines finish there assignment or die trying. Good read…not much by way of language or other objectionable stuff.
30. **JUGGERNAUGHT: The Ixan Prophesies Trilogy Book 2,** by Scott Bartlett (2017). These are becoming quite “enjoyable” from a military sci- fi perspective. The in space battles are really detailed and nail bitters and the on-going story on Vin Husher and his dad gets more and more convoluted as the stories go on. Questions looms large in his mind, Is his father a traitor to the UHF …mankind, in general or not? What role is he to play in saving mankind or in mankind’s destruction? The character development between species is great. We have Wingers who are a humanoid but bird like alien. We have the Gok who are large Ogre types who have been programmed by the Ixa to kill at all cost. We have the Fins which an underwater “people” who have great insight and have kept the Wingers prosperous through the years in a symbiotic relationship beneficial to both races. Captain Keyes is back along with the whole crew of the Providence that is now a rogue ship because of the vendetta against the Wingers even though both side know that it was a greedy corporation Darkstream that s doing all they can to keep the war machine going. War means profits. And when it was discovered that so many in the government and on the bridges of ship were in the back pocket of the corporation it was time to do something no matter what the Ixan prophecies seemed to be pointing to. Keyes is fighting to place humanity back on a path of coexistence with the other non-warring species so he brings in an old ally the Tumbrans to set up a chance to win. Many battles ensue and Keyes is captured along with the *Providence* but the remaining crew, including Fesky, Husher and one loan Fin, that weren’t captured and a courageous Senator seek to change the tides of war trying to set up a juggernaut that will turn things in their favor. This one is definitely one that you don’t want to put down. Are all the questions answered? Well, since there is another book you already know the answer…but what a ride. Onto **RECKONING.**
31. **THE EVER-CHANGING MOON: Book One: First Footprints** by Rob Bailey (2023).Yes…that Rob Bailey, the pastor from Southside Community Church in Corpus Christi, TX., moonnerd “par excellance”, and my friend and colleague. This was an excellent read. While it closely catalogues the space program up to and including Apollo 12, with just enough of Apollo 13…ending with the famous words, *“Houston, we have a problem”…*so that you want to read the next one **BOOK TWO: MAN”S FIRST JOURNEY TO THE LUNAR HIGHLANDS i**t is no way a snoozer. It keeps a reader going to find out what happens even if you know! For those of us who lived these moments via TV this whole book is a real experience. I remember this so well, *“Over three miles away, CBS news correspondent Walter Cronkite had the enthusiasm of a small child watching the historic liftoff. As the mighty rocket cleared the launch tower, the sound waves pounded his broadcast booth. ‘Our building is shaking here!! Our building is shaking!! The ROAR is terrific!! The building is shaking! This big glass window is shaking and we’re holding it with our hands. Look at that ROCKET go!!’ He exclaimed these memorable words while being showered by debris from the quaking walls and ceiling.”*  And I cried all over again at the recounting of the excruciating deaths of the Apollo 1 crew who are forever remembered for their sacrifice. But for those generations that have come along since, this book will walk you into and through a story told one of those space enthusiast, “moonerd” Rob Bailey, who enables us to hear and read the story from the very people who lived it and made it happen enabling you once again to get the “bug” for space exploration or the desire to be an astronaut. While along the way maybe learning something about how life CAN work. I wanted to be one like so many other of us at the age but then I realized how smart these guys had to be and began setting my eyes on something more down to earth …while never stopping to look up and wonder… Thanks, Rob for re-igniting that old desire and that spark for space. Jeff Hale referred to a quote by Frank Borman which appears on many Naval Aviation posters: *“A superior pilot uses his superior judgment to avoid situations which require the use of his superior skill.”* This quote ought to encourage us to make sure we are doing our very best at whatever task lays in front of us with all the confidence of someone who has trained and prepared to do what is ahead. The quotations of scripture that were read on board in these momentous moments in the Apollo program to the prayer from the chaplain on board of the *USS Hornet* when the crew of Apollo 11 were in quarantine…the faith of a nation is seen in this book …faith in man’s ability to do what it seeks to achieve and the faith of those who believed who did not hesitate to give credit to God for enabling us to do the unthinkable just a decade before.
32. **ON DIVINE MEDITATION,** BY William Bates (2020 by Monergism). William Bates (1625-199) was one of the most popular and esteemed preachers among the Nonconformists; a master of the Puritan plain (read “expositional”) style of preaching, his stress on piety earned him the name “silver-tongued.” The umbrella passage that guides this book/treatise in **Psalm 119:97- *“Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.”*** He expounds simply on this text saying, *“Constant love produces continual meditation on God's law.”* But lest we think this limits him…think again…for he methodically shows through Scripture that God has ordained this practice of meditation for His own glory and the good of His people. It seems that he was either getting question about how to maintain a strong Christian walk or he perceived the tension in his people in seeking to try to maintain this walk so he lays out for them and for us the why’s of meditation along with the benefits. Along the way he also speaks to why’s of our weaknesses in the faith. *“He hath from eternity spent his thoughts upon you, and they are every moment going forth towards you; there should be a continual return of our thoughts to him. God hath given his Son to you, and will you not give your thoughts to him? It is the most unkind recompense to neglect this duty of meditation.”* So he seeks to give direction against such neglect. *“Meditation, is the serious exercise of the understanding, whereby our thoughts are fixed on the observation of spiritual things in order to practice. Consider the end of meditation. It is in order to practice. For fixing our thoughts observe the following particulars. Meditate in a methodical way. Begin with those things which are low, and then ascend higher, you will find a sensible advantage, by an orderly management of this duty; for this will be of special use to confine our thoughts. When we run from one object to another without order, we lose the benefit. As when there is a crowd of persons press forward to go through one door, all are hindered in their progress: so when our thoughts run from one object to another, we cannot proceed nor make such sensible progress as otherwise we might do, one thought hinders another.”* As I said he speaks of the why’s for meditation and the benefits from it for the believer…so if you take this book and combine it with **A LIFE CULTIVATED: How Scriptures Speak to All of Life,** edited by Joel R. Beeke and Ryan M. McGraw (2023), (#4 in above reviews), especially the chapter entitled, *How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?,* then you will have a formula for success in developing a well-round spiritual discipline that will enable you to grow and be more effective for God’s glory and the good of His people.
33. **THE EVER-CHANGING MOON: Book Two: Apollo 16's Journey to the Lunar Highlands.** by Rob Bailey (2023). Again, another book that I could not put down. The author left us wanting more at the end of the first book with those immortal words, *“Houston, we have a problem!”,* and He delivered so much more with this one as well. This book highlights the missions between Apollo 11and 17, with a short chapter or 2 on the space shuttle and joint Soviet /US missions. Apollo 11, 13 and 16 get the most coverage. So much more details that I was ever aware of with Apollo 11, 13 and 16. These guys were real hero’s… the best of the best put to the test. They had simulated every possible thing that they were so convinced that nothing would stop them from carrying out their mission. Even Mission Control and all the support agencies worked together without personal biases or ego. They worked as one to bring home the astronauts of Apollo 13 never doubting that they would come home safe…and this team work was all caught on camera. Another thing you are hit with in both of these books, but more so in this one, is the amount of man hours put in by so many committed personnel who were developing strategies, equipment and scenarios for complications and success long before the mission ever got a go. This type of commitment is almost unheard of today… in fact, I wonder if we could do this today? The comradery is amazing...in the midst of crisis or just regular problems they were calm and collected ...working the problem with all expectation of fixing it and getting everyone home. Again, I wonder if that is something we could even expect out of a "team" of scientists and engineers today? The author says, *“At first, it seemed there was no hope of getting the repair done(to Apollo 16) in time for an April launch. The motivated and talented engineers hunkered down and worked around the clock, racking up excessive overtime. Against steep odds, Tribe’s group replaced the bladder in less than two weeks. The brutal schedule took its toll on morale but is an example of the behind-the-scenes team effort necessary to send men to the Moon. One of those men, Charlie Duke, was relieved to have an extra month to recover from his pneumonia.”* The hard work and confidence led to humor in almost every area of the mission throughout. The humor is one of the wonderful things that carry’s this book through so much detail. And if you ever get the chance to meet Charlie Duke ask him, does he like orange juice yet?
34. **SPARTAN VALOR: An Orion Porter Novel Spartan Company Book 2,**by Toby Neighbors (2018). Porter and his 2 Sergeants have been left behind to fend for themselves until the fleet returns to Apex Venandi and they will return because of the fact that these 3 completed their mission making sure the fleet knew of the IX gas (that runs the fleet and most every other life giving resource for the humans) and got a message off to that effect. When the fleet returns however there old LT who had left them to fend for themselves, who is now a Captain, returns with a vengeance. While the Staff Sergeant and others survivors of Spartan company were cared for, the Captain send Orry and MS Eubanks out on recon on what was certainly a suicide mission, but it didn’t turn to be that much to the Captains dislike…so they are put in charge of the road that needs to be built to the volcano to retrieve the IX gas. Gloria, from boot camp days, shows up and a friendship is rekindled… then almost on cue Aurora, Orry’s first love, if you will, shows up with the other spooks from Military Intelligence (which is even an oxymoron in this universe) and things begin to fall apart. (Nothing in this book that gives any details of things concerning relationships that couldn’t be told to your grandma.) Gloria is captured by the natives and Orry is sent out to retrieve her and he does. Then Aurora in captured and disavowed by her own spooks and so while saving Gloria he makes a deal that may come back to haunt him to achieve Aurora’s release...who abruptly reveals where her real loyalties lie. The natives tribes that usually war against one another and perceived to be “primitive” band together to attack and stop the Marines from getting to the IX gas setting up a dilemma that is eventually exasperated by the Captain’s actions. Will they get back to base camp? What happens under the Captain’s reign over “his” little fiefdom? Will Orry ever get off this planet? And what about the fact that he has been charged with treason? What? Yep you have to read, how that all plays out. Really good read. A very similar read than the Van Horn series above and last year.
35. **A CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS** by Thomas Goodwin (1650’s) This has been an interesting book by a favorite Puritan Thomas Goodwin. This is not one of his easier reads and I think it is because of the content in which it covers. His main text comes from ***Isaiah 50:10- “Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of His servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.”*** He also quotes from **Ps. 88,** a lament of Heman the Ezrahite. The Isaiah verse is an interesting text to build this message on because He seems to be addressing the believer who is darkness for a time…(the next verse speaks to the unbeliever.) This while book then speaks to the reasons for these times from a biblical perspective…times of anxiety, times of terror of losing the Holy Spirit (like David speaks of), times of God seemingly turning His back on His own and other many times where we are dry and feel deserted and are deserted for a time by God. It has been a hard read because of the subject matter…and slow because of the subject matter as well. He helps this along though as one of the few writers of his day to use the concept of short chapters (10-15 pages max. in most cases). And these few lines of description don’t even begin to capture the depth of this whole book but it does speak to common misperceptions of people when they are in the midst of God’s discipline. Pastorally, throughout this book he speaks against ever allowing our “feelings/sense” to rule our thoughts and decision concerning what has been revealed to us by God, the Spirit, His Word and the leaders placed over us in the Church. As I finish this book up, there is many assumptions made by this author as well as other Puritan authors like William Bridge in his book **A LIFT UP for the DOWNCAST** (1648). *“Let the troubled soul make diligent search. Let an inquisition be set up in thy heart, So, Ps. 77:6, David, in case of desertion, is said to do: 'I communed with mine own heart, and made diligent search.' Now in this search make inquiry into two things:— First, What might be the true cause which provokes God thus to leave thee, and hide himself from thee? Secondly, What in thine own heart is the main doubt and objection, reasoning and apprehension, which causeth thee to fear, and thus to call all into question? These are two distinct things. For though God hath just cause and reason to leave us to this trouble, yet often the thing that troubles and disquiets us is a mere mistake, a misapprehension; even as a father sees good reason often to scare the child, but yet the thing he suffers him to be affrighted with is but a mere bugbear. It is necessary to inquire into both.”* The assumptions are centered on the depth of faith they suppose their readers have…which presumes that they have a strong relationship with the Lord so that when trouble comes all they need to do is remember their faith and remember the work of the Lord thus far. He does not minimize the work it will take to overcome the depression…but assuming they really understand and accept that Jesus has overcome they will as well with lots of hard work mixed with God’s grace. Which is true, but without the help of others and modern medications it may not be possible to “balance” a person out to where they can actually “see” the goodness of the Lord again. But never knowing that they dealt so deeply with “melancholy” and despair this has been an enlightening book. I hope someone modernizes the language.
36. **RECKONING: The Ixan Prophesies Trilogy Book 3,** by Scott Bartlett (2017). Wow, what a whirl wind race against time to save humanity and all sentient species in the galaxy that they inhabit from a super AI naming itself Baxa bent on their total destruction. He has created a super fleet…legions large…too large to destroy by what is left of the Fleet that admiral Keyes leads from the supercarrier *Providence.* Sentient colony after sentient colony is being destroyed by the Ixan’s newest weapon that the fleet has no answer for. The whole Sol systems, with billions of humans, have ceased to exist along with the home worlds of the Winger’s and Fins and many of their colony worlds. The Ixan are in it for total annihilation. Keyes is dealing with his own demons from his imprisonment and he must…somehow … overcome those so that he can once again be the leader that he once was with humanity and other species at stake will his personal vendetta take over and aid in destroying everyone but the Ixa? So Keyes must deal with his demons and come up with another strategy. With the help of Vin Husher, after his father is put death charged with capital murder and treason, they set out to find and destroy Baxa otherwise the galaxy will burn. It is a great conclusion to a fast paced and exciting space military space drama.
37. **CAPTAIN AND COMMAND: A Prequel to the Ixan Legacy Trilogy,** by Scott Bartlett (2020). An interesting prequel to this new trilogy. This series is post **SUPERCARRIER, Ixan Prophecy Trilogy.** He gets us engaged with the main character Captain Vin Husher, captain of the IGF *Hornet*, The Hornet had been named in honor of Husher’s father, Warren Husher, who’d piloted a carrier of the same name during the First Galactic War. Captain Husher knows his stuff after all he had served on the last ship ever to deploy fighters in space combat. The *Providence’s* exploits during the Second Galactic War—which had unquestionably made the difference between victory and the extinction of every sapient species in the galaxy—had not gone unnoticed. The IGF now fielded several carriers in space looking to build capital ships with the same capabilities but also with civilians on board. (Sounds like Star Trek: The Next Generation?) Captain Husher is the son Warren Husher that actually saved the day from the Ixan Alliance who were allied with a race of ruthless alien called the Gok who they had given a “phage” that caused them to have heightened aggression. *Warren Husher had been captured during that conflict, and framed as a traitor by the enemy. When he regained his freedom during the Second Galactic War, his own species had executed him—only to learn that they had Warren to thank for their survival.*  To move us into the series we see that Captain Vin Husher is being given command of one of these capital ships and the book ends with him getting the Winger, Fesky, who had been his CAG on the Hornet, and who had been with him on the *Providence,* to be his XO on this ship. A Winger is an alien species, that humans have an alliance with, that are birdlike… feathers and all. Interesting interchanges so far…building off the **SUPERCARRIER** series **IXAN PROPHIES** I now move on to the **Ixan Legacy Trilogy** starting with **Capital Starship.**
38. **SPARTAN GUILE: An Orion Porter Novel Spartan Company Book 3,** by Toby Neighbors (2019). These military sci-fi’s that he produces are so good. They keep you on the edge of your seat especially if you love sci-fi and the Marines (military, in general). They show the good, the bad and the ugly without all the foul language and or physical things that go on when you have a coed military. This book brings to the conclusion a story of an unlikely societal throw away who becomes an exceptional Marine with instincts that get more of his people home than not. The military machine is seen in its worst way sometimes while the grunts on the ground are the ones of virtue. The absolute need for Ignatius Gas (IX gas) drives the military to sacrifices hundreds of people for their goal and at the same time the loyalty for country (humanity in all the galaxy) and their commitment to one another is never lost, especially of the grunts. So while we get to see the worst of humanity we also see the best and how they co-exist even with the same goals. Having said that, Apex Venandi (Orry’s first deployment with Marine Recon Spartan Company) is stretching everyone’s sense of humanity to the bare thread when it comes to dealing with one another and with the local alien population. Rather than negotiate with these aliens who are set on war at all cost the powers that be set out to take it from them…which ensues all of the major warring factions to band together to destroy the humans and they almost succeed. The solution to their problems become evident and Orry and what’s left of Spartan Company take it and finally get off the planet…but there is so much in between that is worth your time for these book are greatly relaxing, that is for those who like such a read.
39. **NIGHT OF WEEPING:When God’s Children Suffer,** Horatius Bonar (1849, updated and digitalized in 2020 by Monergism). Bonar was a popular 19th Century Scottish preacher and hymnodist. Our author speaks to this important subject in the shadow of many verses but these two as foundational: **Ps. 30:5- *“For His anger is but for a moment, and His favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”***And **Acts 14:22-*“…and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”***He opens with these words, *“IT IS NO EASY MATTER to write a book for the family of God. Yet it is for them that these thoughts on chastisement are written.”* This book exposes a truth that we do not appreciate so much today in this “let’s not talk about sin” age…the chastisement of the Lord so that we become more and more like His Son and less and less like the world. He tackles the suffering that we know of as the war of persecution and oppression that is in much of the world being waged on the Christian Church. But he also talks about God’s ways in our sanctification on a daily basis that we don’t even consider His chastisement. From stubbed toes to public confessions of sin all things that are in God’s ability to use to get our attention to come back to him or more importantly to desire to stay on the path He has laid before us. But when we do stray He will use what is best to get our attention. He states, *“As we observed before, God's object in chastisement is the education of His children, the training up of the saints. It is their imperfect spiritual condition that makes this so necessary. And now we proceed to inquire in what way it works, and toward what regions of the soul it is specially directed. For while, doubtless, it embraces the whole soul in all its parts and powers, it may be well to consider it as more especially set to work upon its mind, its will, its heart, and its conscience. It is the training of the mind. We are naturally most unteachable as well as most ignorant, neither knowing anything nor willing to know. The ease of prosperous days augments the evil. God at length interposes and compels us to learn.* ***‘The rod and reproof give wisdom.’*** *He sends trial and that makes us willing to learn. Our unteachableness gives way. Luther used to say, ‘Were it not for tribulation I should not understand Scripture.’ And every sorrowing saint responds to this, as having felt its truth—felt it as did David, when he said, ‘Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, … and teachest him out of thy law.’ ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." What teaching, what training of the mind goes on upon a sickbed, or under the pressure of grief! And, oh, what great and wondrous things will even some little trial whisper in the ear of a soul that is ‘learning of the Father’!”* he wants us to understand God’s ways so that we can take great consolation in what He is doing. *“We are getting rid of sin. Each pain is a nail driven through some sin, another blow inflicted on the flesh, destroying the very power of sinning. As we entered on our first life, sin fastened its chain upon us, and link after link twined itself about us. When we commenced our second and better life, these began one by one to untwine themselves. Affliction untwined them faster; and though it is not till we are laid on a deathbed or till Jesus comes that the last link of earth is thoroughly untwined or broken, still it is consolation to think that each successive trial is helping on the blessed consummation. A lifetime's sufferings would not be too long or too heavy, if by means of them we got rid of sin and sinful ways and tempers, and became more holy, more heavenly, more conformable to the image of the Lord. All is love. Affliction is the expression of paternal love. It is from the deepest recess of the fountain of love that sorrow flows down to us. And love cannot wrong us. It blesses, but cannot curse. Its utterances and actions are all of peace and gladness. It wants a larger vessel into which to empty itself, and a deeper channel through which to flow. That is all. It seeks to make us more susceptible of kindness, and then to pour that kindness in. Yes, love is the true, the one origin of the sharpest stroke that ever fell upon a bleeding heart. The truth is, there is no other way of accounting for affliction but this. Anger will not account for it, forgetfulness will not account for it, chance will not account for it. No. It is simply impossible to trace it to any cause but love. Admit this as its spring, and all is harmonious, comely, perfect. Deny it, and all is confusion, cruelty, and darkness. Chastising love is the faithfulest, purest, truest, tenderest, deepest of all. Let this be our consolation.”* Yet, another, thought provoking and encouraging work from a not so well known Scottish Puritan.
40. **SUFFERING IN SILENCE: Ministering to Those with Mental Illness** by Timothy Mulder (2023). Tim is a pastoral candidate in the South Texas Presbytery and has been a bipolar disorder sufferer for a long time. This has been one of the most eye-opening books I have read in sometime. While there is a lot of technical information here Tim weaves his own story throughout this book along with his strong theological convictions of God’s sovereignty. So thankful for Tim’s courage in writing and sharing. His section concerning the number of known sufferers in church history is an amazing eye opening experience in itself. Charles Spurgeon said, *“As to mental maladies, is any man altogether sane? Are we not all a little off the balance?”* Tim paints a grave picture of how the church has treated those with mental illness. He also is urgently clear concerning how important it is to have some understanding of these diseases to be able to minister to those in our congregation who are suffering as well as utilize them as active and productive members of the congregation where appropriate. He considers questions such as: How can you recognize someone who may potentially be struggling with mental illness? Why are those who suffer from mental illness so often misunderstood? Why are churches well positioned to help people struggling with mental illness? How can you best minister to those with mental illness? He does not make excuses for their behavior and he does not condemn them either. He is clear that many of the things done by these people are sinful and they are responsible for their sin while at the same time seeking to help them get their condition under control for it will never go away. Since suicide is so prevalent among this group of people he spends a lot of time discussing how to help in these situations while at the same time talking about how suicide is a sin just like murder. Not the unpardonable sin, but sin, none the less. This book is an extremely helpful and encouraging book that every session member ought to read as we are always seeking ways to understand how best to shepherd our flocks that we have been given. This is yet another tool…dare I say… important tool to help in this work.
41. **THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS: A Readable Modern-Day Version of John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress (Revised and easy-to-read) Part 1,** by John Bunyan, Alan Vermilye (Copyright © 2020 Alan Vermilye Brown Chair Books). This is perhaps the most readable version that I have ever read. And, having read this a number of times in the old English I can also say that this version does not water down any of the original theology in this most famous allegory ever written. You gotta love it, *“This is to show how the law; instead of cleansing the heart from sin, revives sin, giving it strength to grow and develop in the soul. You can see that the law can both discover and condemn sin, but it has no power to control it.”* The story, of course, chronicles the epic adventure of a man named Christian who leaves his home in the City of Destruction and begins a life-long journey to the Celestial City. From what I have read this version is unabridged with chapter heading and subdivision to help with readability. Being easy to read will make this book even more beloved. Here is an example of readability and sound theology, being true to the original author intent, *“Evangelist agreed, and as they continued their journey, he began to tell them of things to come. ‘My sons, you have heard in the words in the truth of the gospel that you must go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of heaven. You’ve also heard that in every city, imprisonment and afflictions await you. You cannot travel much farther without encountering them in one way or another. In fact, you’ve already experienced a measure of this truth, and more will immediately follow. As you can see, you’re almost out of this wilderness, and soon you will come to a town that will appear directly before you. In that town, you will be severely assaulted by enemies who will make every attempt to kill you. You can be sure that one or both of you must seal the testimony that you hold with blood. But if you’re faithful, even to the point of death, the King will give you a crown of life. Whoever dies there, although his death will be unnatural and quite painful, he will have the advantage over his companion, not only because he will arrive at the Celestial City first but because he will escape many miseries that the other will meet with in the rest of his journey. When you arrive in this town and find everything that I have said fulfilled, remember your friend, be courageous, and commit yourselves to God, your faithful Creator, while continuing to do what is right.’”* The call of suffering in the Christian life was a real thing to the Christians of old as well as to our original author…suffering to the point of death with the martyrs being taken directly to the altar before the throne of God in an honored placed so we can be motivated to continue the work God has called the rest of us too because of God’s glory, their sacrifice and to the honor of the One who made the ultimate sacrifice for all who are His. This is an excellent read that should probably be on everyone’s reading list yearly especially if you have little children as they grow. So if you had worked hard to get through the original…thank God you did finish it… but now read this version for pleasure and assurance. It is on audio books as well. Now I will read **The Pilgrim’s Progress Part 2 Christiana’s Journey** by John Bunyan and Alan Vermilye.
42. **DO NOT BE TRUE TO YOURSELF: Countercultural Advice for the Rest of Your Life,** by Kevin DeYoung (2023). Wow…what a book. In a culture of self-obsession this is a breath of fresh air reminding us of the simple truths of Scripture in a modern and in your face sort of way. We must be shocked out of our malaise and compromise with this culture and stand in the truth. As he puts it at one point, *“The choice that matters most is actually a lifetime of choices.”* This little book seeks to move us along that path. The consequence of all of this self-love is seen every day on the news and in our newsfeeds on-line. The Christian’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him and when we do this we actually experience His peace and hope more often than not as opposed to those who seek to glorify themselves who are only finding despair and ruin. While he opens with his speaking at a commencement (this book is made up of commencement speeches) this book is more than a book to hand out graduates (it is not any less, either). This book is one of those short books that you can read in a couple of setting and capture a fresh outlook on the scriptures to be able to stand firm in the Lord. He calls upon all Christian to submit their lives to the will of God not the god of their own desires. A Christ-centered worldview is the answer to so many of life’s dilemmas. He will be dealing with specific topics as well like relationship, work, church participation, fighting temptations and making godly decisions. And at the end is a great chapter on what he considers to be the 12 greatest books (all from dead guys!) he has read in his life…take a look and compare!
43. **WITH ALL YOUR HEART: Orienting Your Mind, Desires, and Will toward Christ** by A. Craig Troxel (2020 Crossway). In a world where we use the word heart to speak of our feelings/emotions it is good to have a contemporary author take on the biblical understanding of this word to help us with our biblical vocabulary. I say contemporary author because others in days gone by written with great eloquence on the heart like John Flavel **On Keeping the Heart; Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled** by Richard Sibbes or Matthew Mead’s **The Discovery of the Plague of Our Heart.** In all of these cases and others but especially here we see that the Bible defines the heart as the governing center of our life…emotional, physical, mental and spiritual. The truth is, as our author tells us, *““Christ enables his people to grow progressively in holiness by consecrating the desires of our hearts. Just as nothing in our nature has escaped the wreckage of sin, so also nothing in our nature escapes the touch of his reforming grace. 3 We now stand definitively holy before God through the blood of Christ. But it does not always feel that way.”* Understanding the difference between our hearts desires and God was something that hit me when reading this book. *“From time to time, Christ will teach us a lesson by permitting us a small sip of what we crave to show us that it is not what we really wanted. Some lessons must be learned firsthand. John Owen said that the Lord allows that one particular sin to linger in your life because if it were not there, you would have no reason to return to God with repentant tears.”* (Think Paul). It is a good thing that this was a Kindle version or almost every line would have been highlighted and underlined. One more quote… *“It may strike some as odd, if not cruel, that God could rejoice over a broken and contrite heart. After all, doesn’t this refer to a heart that grieves or is in pain? True (Ps. 69: 20; Jer. 23: 9), but a ‘broken heart’ also describes a heart in which God takes great joy because it is repentant. This is a genuinely ‘godly grief’ for sin that shows itself in earnestness, anger, fear, longing, and zeal; such sorrow leads to salvation (2 Cor. 7: 10–12). It is those bearing this type of sorrow whom Christ promised ‘shall be comforted’ (Matt. 5: 4). No true Christian can bypass this type of grief. No growing Christian ever outlives this kind of humble repentance. As J. Gresham Machen stated, ‘Christianity is the religion of the broken heart.’ No humble Christian tires of confessing that he or she has strayed from the narrow road and needs to turn back to God (1 Kings 18: 37). Self-consciousness of sin never ends. True spirituality lives and has its being in repentance. The heart made new by God’s Spirit says yes to God’s will. It welcomes the joy of becoming a servant of Christ and a slave to righteousness. Self-denial and ‘taking up the cross’ are now embraced as the high calling of discipleship. The new heart has found itself by losing itself. It sees that virtue is not always measured by sheer strength but is also seen in meekness—in the gentleness of strength under control. It wants to become like Christ, and so it is willing to submit to Christ.”* This book was truly a moving experience from start to finish.
44. **HOW SHALL I GO TO GOD?** by Horatius Bonar (digitalized 2020). This book is a rather a simple treatise to a church of the mid-to 19th Century that was straying from the faith and were in need of simple teaching of the truth to bring them back to the faith. 19th Century England was a Christian nation, of course, and everyone thought of themselves as a Christian…and at the same time things were obviously just Not right where their world. Bonar pens this work that is made up of sermons from the latter part of his life to get to the heart of the problem. He begins with, *“HOW SHALL I GO TO GOD? IT is with our sins that we go to God, for we have nothing else to go with that we can call our own. This is one of the lessons that we are so slow to learn; yet without learning this we cannot take one right step in that which we call a religious life. In the settlement of the great question between the sinner and God, there was to be no bargaining and no price of any kind. The basis of settlement was laid eighteen hundred years ago; and the mighty transaction on the cross did all that was needed as a price. ‘It is finished,’ is God's message to the sons of men in their inquiry, ‘What shall we do to be saved?’ This completed transaction supersedes all man's efforts to justify himself, or to assist God in justifying him. We see Christ crucified, and God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; and this non-imputation is the result solely of what was done upon the cross, where the transference of the sinner's guilt to the Divine Surety was once and for ever accomplished. It is of that transaction that the gospel brings us the "good news," and whosoever believeth it becomes partaker of all the benefits which that transaction secured and the righteousness that is HIS alone to give.”* The rest of the book lays out simply but profoundly the truths that either need to be remembered by straying believers who recognize that something is “off” in their lives or by the non-believer that is convinced that something is “off”. Drawing this book to a close he wanted to leave his hearers and readers with this solemn point. *“The time is drawing near. The arrival of all these things may be nearer than we think. For ‘He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.’ ‘What manner of persons,’ then, ‘ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!’ We shall be like Him when we shall see Him as He is. Shall we not seek to be like Him here?”* Another excellent read from a pastor often unheard of and left unread with so much to remind us of so we can walk the Way in bringing God glory.
45. **THE MASCULINE MANDATE : God Calling to Men,** by Richard D. Phillips (2010). This is probably the 3rd time I have read this book but it seems it might be my first review...interesting! The big question that this book answers is; What does it mean to be a man made in God’s image? I place this book right up there with Susan Hunt’s book, **BY DESIGN**, which answers the question of what it means to be a woman made in God’s image. These 2 books ought to be on every pastor’s shelves and as well in our home where we are raising boys and girls to grow into God’s image. While this book is almost a decade and a half old it still speaks to the cultural norms of our day that seek to redefine the role of masculinity and men designed by God. This book also deals with many of the legalistic reaction to some of the more legalistic men’s movements (like Wild at Heart) seeking to regain the position of men in a not so biblical fashion. One of the reasons I like this book is because he begins in the Garden of Eden and makes his case built around man’s call to “keep and work” God’s garden…whatever garden God places us in! Masculinity grounded in the cultural mandate brings us back to the real desires of God for men which is “good” for women and children. So he breaks the book up into 2 sections Understanding our Mandate and Living our mandate as a man of god in our respective roles that God gives us throughout our lives. Our men’s group just finished this book up…it brought with it some great conversations and even greater realization of how we need to seek the Lord more to be the men that His Word calls us to be. This is a great motivational book that draws us back time and time again to the Bible which is our base and foundation for our mandate as men before the Lord, before our families and before the world. Another equally good book is by R. Kent Hughes **DISCIPLINES of a GODLY MAN**. I have given both of these books out a lot through the years.
46. **SET APART FOR GOD: based on HOLINESS, by J.C. Ryle,**by John Murray (not that John Murray the theologian of the 20th Century) (2021). The call to holiness is not an option for believers although our lives often reflect the opposite since we love the world too much. Books like **HOLINESS** by J.C. Ryle are extremely helpful and readable to the modern reader...but the benefit of this book is that this author/editor  takes (in his opinion) the pertinent arguments from Ryle to seek to clear up any unwanted struggle that some might think when they seek to read a book written so long ago.  The other thing he brings to the table in this short book is a study guide of discussion questions related to the biblical texts as well as Ryle commentary at the end of each chapter. Question like; What is the right knowledge of sin?  Where does sin originate? Do we realize the “amazing sinfulness of sin”?  These and so many others are likewise lifted from the text of the original book and placed at the end of the chapter so that we might meditate on them. One of the quotes lifted from the original book speaks to this aspect of our recognizing our sin, *“There is a constant battle between the flesh and the spirit. We need to daily, watch and pray. The deceitfulness of sin presents sin as less dangerous than it is. You may see this deceitfulness in the wonderful proneness of men to regard sin as less sinful and dangerous than it is in the sight of God; and in their readiness to extenuate it, make excuses for it, and minimize its guilt. Men try to cheat themselves into the belief that sin is not quite so sinful as God says it is, and that they are not so bad as they really are. We have to do what Hebrews 3: 13 says to do: ‘Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.’”*Speaking specifically to holiness, Murry lifts this quote, *“What does it cost to be a holy man? We should sit down and count the cost and consider the state of our souls. It costs us our self-righteousness. We must lose our pride, our high thoughts, and any conceit of goodness we might have and admit we go in as a poor sinner saved by grace owing to merit and righteousness of another. It cost us our sins. We cannot stick to any sins. God will save any sinner, but He will not save one who continues in sin. It costs a man love of ease. We should expect no gains without some pains. It costs favor of the world. Many will be mocked, ridiculed, slandered, persecuted, and even hated. A cheap Christianity without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown. A religion which costs nothing is worth nothing. Awake and repent. It may cost much to be a true Christian and consistent believer, but it pays.”*He ends the book with an excellent summation of all that had come before…making this an excellent little free book to pick up and read. A common churchman’s work to help the Church bring back to punch of scriptures as seen through the eyes of J.C. Ryle, one of the most celebrated pastor/theologians of the 19th Century.
47. **UNION WITH CHRIST,**by Thomas Boston (2023 from Monergism). This book is grounded in John 15:5- *“I am the vine; you are the branches.”*It is said to be a modern English version, and it is, but it seems they only changed the words not so much the grammar. Having said that though having read this a few times before the “modern” version certainly would make an already easy read more readable for today’s reader.  And today’s reader needs to read this for its depth but also to help us understand our identity in Christ. There are so many questions surrounding identity today and this book enables the reader to see, from Scripture, how we are in Christ, using a very familiar story from Scripture and also how we remain in Christ using this simple verse as its foundation. He talks about *“how the branches are cut off from the natural stock, the first Adam, and grafted into the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*He then gives a rather extensive sequence of sets showing just how the sinner is led into union with Christ.  While he admits that these sequences may not be just how God breaks the select sinners off from their old life but the issue is that the elect sinner must be and is drawn away from sin and unto Christ. He is seeking to impress our need to deny ourselves and trust in the true vine which is life to those who are grafted on by God Himself through Jesus Christ.  And with that *“Once in Christ, ever in Him!”*
48. **THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS: Part 2 Christiana's Journey: A Readable Modern-Day Version of John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress Part 2 (Revised and easy-to-read),**by John Bunyan, Alan Vermilye (2023).  Again an excellent updating making a once archaic book extremely readable. Having never read this part before because I was always worn out by the original version of Pilgrim’s Progress…great book, hard read in the original) I found that the theology was crisper and more relatable in this one than even in Part one of Christian’s story.  I found Mr. Fearing especially relatable. We fear so much in this life even as we progress in our faith.  Mr. Fearing represents the weak in faith and yet at the same time strong in the faith. Contradiction?  Well, in this life how many of us fear some things and by God’s grace in other times stand firm. Mr. Fearing also had a problem with his humility because he always feared his salvation…again how he represents to Church in different eras of time. Every one along the way is so excited to see Christiana since her husband’s acclaim is so wide spread.  *“Is this really Christian’s wife?’ he asked, surprised. Great Heart smiled. ‘Yes, she is.’ Then he gestured to the surrounding men. ‘And these are his four sons too.’ Valiant was almost speechless. ‘What? And all are going on a pilgrimage together?’ ‘Yes, they are truly following in their father’s footsteps.’ ‘My heart is so glad!’ he said with joyous laughter. ‘Goodness! Can you imagine how joyful Christian will be when he sees his entire family, who before refused to go with him, now entering the gates after him into the Celestial City?’”*This is a life long journey…where Christiana’s sons get married have children and live a long and prosperous life in Beulah land just outside the Celestial City. Just like Christian they meet with many hazards along the way to seek to persuade them to turn back or deny their faith but with the help of their guide Mr. Great Heart along with others they meet along the way their journey is eventful but not ever lost. It is a bit bloodier than the original as there is a few actual brutal battles and killings of the giants in the land (think a number of David and Goliath situations) The end of the book is one of complete comfort and encouragement for any pilgrim that endeavors to read this masterpiece work of the Christian journey through life.
49. **KNOW THY ENEMY: A Military Sci-Fi Series (Grimm’s War Book 5),**by Jeffery H. Haskell (2023).  It is so good to get back together with old friends. It has been over 6 months in the wait...between his releasing this book and me in the middle of other reads. Lt. Commander Jacob Grimm(captain of the boat *Intrepid*) is back with yet another adventure that places him and his crew in a high stakes gambit with the Caliphate as the Caliphate has somehow develop faster than light technology that appears to give them the ability to communicate at an “instant” notice from anywhere in the galaxy.  All beloved members of the crew, like Allison Jennings and the other marines, Nadia the super spy, Chief Boudreaux, Admiral DeBeck, and the CIC staff from the missions before that Jacob has come to trust with his life. These are there with a few more especially one with the propensity to get into loads of trouble and that is putting it mildly when people’s lives are in danger because of it. In this episode Jacob and his crew are sent to rescue a very important operative who has been sent to a faraway planet hidden in the midst of Caliphate space to secure the scientist who developed this advanced technology that is causing the war to be shifting to the wrong side.  But, of course, they end up securing a whole lot more than they ever expected. This story is so good as we see the pain of loss and the thrill of seeking to overcome the greatest challenges with a CO who cares for his people and his faith, always taking decisions to the Lord in prayer. He is NOT pristine and the author shows it without the unnecessary amount of cussing or scenes of unnecessary details of one’s private life...in fact, not even a glimpse which is always good with me. This was the 5th book in the series and now on to the 6th and what I believe to be the last in the series **A GRIMM DECISION.**Problem is this, it doesn’t come out until September so I will just HAVE to read it on vacation! LOL!
50. **ON THE FEAR OF GOD,**by William Bates (1625-1699) (Monergism digital 2020). It was said of him that he was *“The ‘silver-tongued’ and the ‘politest’ of all the nonconformists preachers.”*This book is developed around a topic that was much more understood in days gone by than it is now. It seems that it was talked about more then, than today.  People seemed to understand the difference between a servile fear and a filial fear of the Lord. The author captures the many text in the Scripture to make a clear case for any who may still be struggling with this but his main text which is so evident in Puritan treatises is Job 28:28- *“And He said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,  and to turn away from evil is understanding.’”*What we have in this short treatise is an almost exhaustive approach to this doctrine of the fear of God for the Christian to be blessed by. He begins by describing the nature of the fear of God, *“The nature of it. The fear of God in scripture is sometimes taken more generally, and so it imports the whole circle of divine duties, and of religious worship. Thus it is said, Eccl. 12:13. ‘fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.’ And the reason why fear is thus taken, is partly because the fear of God hath an influx upon all the duties of godliness, it being, (if I may so speak) the præpositus that guides and orders them, and therefore it may well be put for the whole service that we owe to our Creator; and partly, because the fear of God is an eminent piece of godliness, cue of the prime parts of God's service.”* He goes on the speak of filial fear from Psalm 19, *“The fear of God produceth a flight from sin: this is so essential to the fear of God, that it makes up its description, the fear of God is to depart from evil. In the 19th Psalm ver. 9. you have an expression there, ‘the fear of the Lord is clean;’ it is ‘dean formaliter’, it is clean in itself; it is dean effective, as it makes us clean; that person that thus feats the Lord will not ordinarily neglect the least duty, nor commit the least sin for the greatest good. The fear of God is animœ vigil & custos, it is the sentinel and guard of the soul, which is very vigilant that no temptation may enter in, nor no corruption may pass out.”* And further when talking of filial fear from Psalm 86, he says, *“It composeth the soul, Psal. 86:11. ‘unite my heart to fear thy name.’ There is a natural lightness in the spirits of men, and when we come to religious duties our thoughts are like a bird in a cage, it flutters the more because it is inclosed; our thoughts then are full of such a light discurrency as chaff in the wind, or dust in the air; but now the fear of God binds up the soul from flitting.”*The biggest problem is the non-modern language and the abundant use of Latin (Latin...go figure...these folks are so much smarter than I am, LOL) but once you figure out a way around that it is a blessing to be sure.
51. **CAPITOL STARSHIP:The Ixan Prophecies Book 4** by Scott Bartlett (2019) This is such an interesting book. Not only do we end up with Capt. Vin Husher, Fesky and most of the old crew we see then on the capitol ships discussed at the end of the last book, **CAPTIAN AND COMMAND**.  This Capitol Ship is a Super carrier much much larger than the *Providence*which Husher previously served under. This super carrier supposedly has the most fire power of anything in space that they are aware of. After almost being destroyed by Baxa a super AI they decided to invest in these types of ships to “ensure” the galaxies safety…though Husher knows that another AI, maybe more than one, is gunning for them. On this super carrier along with all the personnel and pilots it takes to run it there exists a city of civilians about 50,000 in all. Well, this comes with all kinds of social issues not normally found on a ship of war. The city council which is a subset of the ruling council of the galaxies combined peoples cam make policy on ship to a certain degree if there is no war going on…so Husher and his ship become baby sitters to a group of people who do not remember that they almost were wiped off the face of the galaxy. These folks are entitled and enabled and they are very vocal about very similar things that we are dealing with in this culture that are divisive and reverse racism. A new invention has taken over the landscape of culture…Oculenses. They basically let you see what you want and they interface with other lens worn by other people so you let them see what you want to them to see. Can you even imagine the problems something like that can cause in a society…well, all you can imagine and more occurs. This makes for a conflict between the decorated war hero that knows there is an enemy lurking around out there and a city official that wants everyone to be equal and “white” people to take their place. Husher is in the midst of an identity crisis since his daughter was killed in a Gok attack on his home...and people take notice of that weakness and make his life a living hell…until the Ixa do in fact return even stronger than before.  This book is about social ills that can and do undermine a society making it easy to be conquered. It is about personal introspection and finding faith or a renewed faith. It is about having a purpose and fulfilling that purpose. Well written as I have come to expect from this author in this story.
52. **ADRIFT (The Lost Warship Book 1)** by Daniel Gibbs (2023).  It is so good to be back with Gen. David Cohen and his crew even the atheist Hayworth who grows on you to be sure. The gang is all back. *“He stood, exited his day cabin, and walked the few steps to the conference room to find it nearly full. Aibek, Ruth, Hanson, Hammond, and Tinetariro occupied the seats nearest the head of the table, while Dr. Hayworth and Taylor sat toward the back. They were joined by Dr. Tural, the Lion’s chief medical officer, and Major Elizabeth Merriweather, a CDF special projects officer who ran the reactor-design program. Colonel Calvin Demood, the Terran Coalition Marine Corps MEU commander, rounded out those assembled. The commanding officers of the six Ajax-class destroyers in their battlegroup along with the commander of the CSV Salinan had joined by vidlink. Tinetariro sprang to her feet. “General on deck!” The others followed suit. “As you were,” David said before dropping into the open seat.”* But then that is one of the secrets of this author…all his characters grow on you. I have been awaiting this book since the last **Echoes of War** concluded with the conclusion of the war, for now, with the League of Sol. The *Lion*was taking a victory lap for the Terran Coalition around the galaxy when into their last FTL (Lawrence drive jump) they didn’t end up where they intended. In fact, they emerged from the subspace portal 4.4 million light years away from home. They have plenty of supplies for now as long as David can find a way home soon. Everyone still flying high from the wars ending but a bit down because of being “stranded” so far away from home pitch in with all that they have to help find a way home because that is what David’s crew does. Within a short time they discover the source, they believe) of the power source that brought them to this galaxy. But the people they find there could not have constructed such a devise for they are at least 300 years behind the Coalition in it technology and also they are bent on annihilating their cousin on a distant planet.  The initial first contact did not go well since no one could even begin to figure out the others language thinking rather that they must be devils come to destroy their sacred artifact that they have been fighting to preserve for as long as time itself. A Fight that David and the *Lion of Judah* has stumbled into …one that they must stop before both culture and the artifact is destroyed. They battle is epic as they seek to knock down each of the missiles of the other side with only a one getting through on either side with loss of life mounting into the millions on planet and into the teens from the *Lion*, people they cannot afford to lose especially after making through the war. At the memorial ceremony for the crewmen of the *Lion*we hear David speak, *“It’s important to remember how they lived up to our credo of courage, commitment, and faith. We must do no less and, in so doing, honor their deeds of valor.” Emotion swept through the room and, to David’s surprise, was present on the faces of most if not all the Zeivlots and Zavlots.”* This book is so good. He is one of my favorite authors…and I can’t wait for the next one **MERCY: The Lost Warship Book 2.**
53. **THE DIDACHE: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles**,  translated and modernized by R. Joseph Owles (2014). The process of translation and modernizing seems to have shortened this work slightly but it is certainly more readable by any and all. **The Didache** is an early Christian manual written around the end of the first century. It seems to have been written by Jews who were seeking to develop a Church Manual so that they and the Gentile believers could come to unity since their up-brings and habits for worship were so different…non-existent in some cases. The Jewish-Christians of the day saw this as a labor of love to their Gentile brothers again for the sole purpose of unity and edification. This was the first of such works. The Didache has 3 main section on dealing with Christian ethics, Sacraments and elements like baptism and the Eucharist (Lord’s Supper), and Church organization…with the opening chapters committed to the definition of the way of life and the way of death. Much of it takes on the flare of Matthew’s Gospel. Some have speculated that this may have its root in the 1st Jerusalem Council around AD 45-50 when the Apostles, under James’ leadership, began setting the stage for such Church Orders. The Didache was lost for centuries until a Greek manuscript was discovered in 1873. Its existence had been known about for centuries since so many Christian Fathers refer to this work as the Church grew placing it a long side of the Apostle’s Creed as early tools for encouraging growth n the faith and making sure everyone was on the same page. Each chapter is made up of quick sayings and teaching making the doctrine or church form clear and easy to understand. In chapter 4 the teachings say, *“Remember Those Who Preach My child, never forget those who continually preach the Word of God to you. Treat these preachers as if they were the Lord himself because the Lord is present in the Word they preach. Seek out the saints every day and find support in their company and in their words. Living in Peace with Others Do not cause divisions. Make peace between those who quarrel. Judge righteously. Do not show partiality when correcting people for what they are doing wrong. Do not waver or become indecisive because you are trying to live both in the world and in the church.”*In chapter 15 we read about Bishops(elders) and Deacons, *“Appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord. They are to be meek. They are not to be greedy. They are to be truthful and proven because they are also carrying out the ministry of the prophets and teachers for all of you. Do not despise them because they are to be honored among you along with the prophets and teachers.”*It is a refreshing read succinct and enjoyable with a look into the first century church.
54. **THE BROAD WAY AND THE NARROW WAY: An Exposition of Mathew 7:13-27**, by A. W. Pink (1885-1952). This work was put together by Monergism in 2023. Arthur Walkington Pink was a prolific preacher and author. At the turn of the 20th Century he was the leading English bible teacher that sparked a worldwide interest in Reformed theology. Spurgeon was preaching the particular Baptist version of Calvinism but was not as popular among the religious elite as he was among the people. Now Reformed theology wasn’t gone but had begun to wain in popularity as the Puritans and their emphasis on a Reformed Covenantal view seemed to be going out of style which began to get more and more denigrated during the Victorian Era…but A.W. Pink made it popular again with his engaging way of teaching and preaching. Interestingly though, his works and teachings became better known in the second half of the 20th Century after his death. This particular work is a compilation of at least 8 sermons and teaching on this subject from Matthew…a subject of much discussion during these years and later as the church became more comfortable with dispensationalism and a stricter form of fundamentalism…Arminianism if you will, something the Pink originally supported but came to see it as one of the greatest weaknesses in these last days. These sermons begins with the way of salvation, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there he which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13, 14 The verses to which we have now come are closely connected with the previous sections of the Lord's Sermon, in which He had described the character of those who were the subjects of His kingdom and had laid down the rules by which they must walk. Such teaching as He had given out was at direct variance with the popular views entertained by His hearers. The Jews supposed that they were all to be the subjects of the Messiah, simply from being the natural descendants of Abraham and because they bore in their flesh the mark of the covenant. But throughout the discourse the Lord Jesus had made it abundantly clear that something more essential than physical lineage and submission to ceremonial rites were required to make them spiritual heirs of the patriarch. There was a straiter gate which had to be entered than any priviledge which natural birth gave admittance to, a narrower way to be traversed than the religious life mapped out by the scribes and the Pharisees. Only those accounted the true children of Abraham who have faith (Rom. 4:16), who do his works (John 8:30), and who are vitally united to Christ by Christ (Gal. 3:29).”*In other words…it is not by birth or a father’s desire or stepping up and signing a decision card “many have been deceived by those satanic catch phrases and events at too many a revival” for it is only by Christ alone that one can be saved to walk the “straiter”/ narrow way! There is a rather lengthy discussion ( anumber of sermons devoted to all the way of the false teachers from this text and their condemnation.  I have never seen something so extensive as this. Not a long book depending upon how it is formatted on you iPhone or other devise but it is so full of helpful information and encouragement which is his basic style.
55. **FOLLOW THE LAMB,** by Horatius Bonar (in 1860...then again in 1874 then through Monergism digital 2020). This book is Bonar’s attempt at helping us to understand what it means to walk in Jesus steps. ***“Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.” (*1 Pet. 2:21)**With 15 separate messages from topics like; be strong in the grace that is in Christ, to deal honestly with yourselves, to take heed of your steps, to live waiting for your Lord, to finally, be of Good Cheer. So this could be titled the pursuit of holiness for all true believers. Along the way he also points out what we should avoid so we can walk unhindered with Christ…following the Lamb of God. This book then is a “handbook” for Christian living. *“When God said to Israel,****'I am the Lord your God,'****He added this,****'Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves; and ye shall be holy, for I am holy' (Lev. 11:44);****and He added this also,****'I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy' (ib. 45).****God calls us to be holy. He becomes our God to make us like Himself. 'He calls us to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' He expects that we should represent Him among our fellow-men by our resemblance to Himself. The carrying out of this holiness is His own work,—the operation of His Spirit. Whether our perfection in holiness is to be wrought gradually or instantaneously, is a question to be determined solely by His word, and not by any theories of our own. That God could make each soul perfect the moment he believes, we admit;—that He may have wise reasons for not doing this,—wise reasons for gradual growth,—will not be denied.”*It was first written to give people an orientation and firm footing for sending them off after conversion into the world to stand fast for Christ. In his own words he states, *“It is for you who are called by the name of Christ that these pages are written, that you may be reminded of what God expects of you, and of what your new name commits you to. It is a great thing to be a Christian. The very name is a noble one, beyond all the noble names of earth. The thing itself is inconceivably blessed and glorious. To say, 'I am a Christian,' is to say, 'I belong to God's nobility; I am of the peerage of heaven.' Much, then, is expected of you. Do not disgrace the old family name. Do nothing unworthy of Him who represents you in heaven, and whom you represent on earth. He is faithful to you; be you so to Him. Let men know what a Lord and Master you serve.”*He here takes what some say is a complex issue and breaks it down in 15 easy memorable lessons for us to simply follow the Savior every day and He directs and …expects. Small book so even men can read this…again another of his purposes to write as he has.
56. **THE RULER OF THE WAVES,**by J.C. Ryle (monergism digital 2023). This is Ryle’s exposition of **Mark 4:37-40-*“And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ And He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’”*** According to J. C. Ryle, this story is full of instruction for all of us. He begins saying, *“It would be well if professing Christians in modern days studied the four Gospels more than they do. No doubt all Scripture is profitable. It is not wise to exalt one part of the Bible at the expense of another. But I think it would be good for some who are very familiar with the Epistles, if they knew a little more about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Now, why do I say this? I say it because I want professing Christians to know more about Christ. It is well to be acquainted with all the doctrines and principles of Christianity. It is better to be acquainted with Christ Himself. It is well to be familiar with faith, and grace, and justification, and sanctification. They are all matters "pertaining to the King." But it is far better to be familiar with Jesus Himself, to see the King's own face, and to behold His beauty. This is one secret of eminent holiness. He that would be conformed to Christ’s image, and become a Christ-like man, must be constantly studying Christ Himself.”* This is three sermons from the same day printed into a treatise full of points that he doesn’t make so clearly in other places and he is surprisingly clear in his teaching on how important a continuous reading and studying of the Gospels are for the Christian is to be sure. In another place he says, *“And now, I have only to ask my readers to make a practical use of the lessons I have brought before them. You have heard this day five things. First. That Christ's service will not secure you against troubles. The holiest saints are liable to them. Second. That Christ is very Man as well as God. Third. That believers may have much weakness and infirmity, and yet be true believers. Fourth. That Christ has all power: and Fifth. That Christ is full of patience and kindness towards His people. Remember these five lessons, and you will do well.”*And he ends as clearly as he began, *“The last word of this paper shall be the same as the first. I want men to read the four Gospels more than they do. I want men to become better acquainted with Christ. I want unconverted men to know Jesus, that they may have eternal life through Him. I want believers to know Jesus better, that they may become more happy, more holy, and more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He will be the holiest man who learns to say with St. Paul,****"To me to live is Christ." (Phil. 1:21.)***
57. **BAND OF BROTHERS: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest,**by Stephen E. Ambrose (first edition 1992, this one is the 25th Anniversary edition 2001). Having watched the mini-series multiple times I had thought that I had read this particular book by Stephen Ambrose. While I had read many books on Easy Company, 101st Airborne, I had NOT read this book. This is THE book that chronicles the lives of these men from Camp Toccoa to the eagle’s nest and beyond for those who lived. Most who have watched the mini-series “know” these fateful and heroic men like Major Richard Winters, Captain Spiers, Captain Nixon and, of course, Captain Sobel who’s sad story is told throughout this book, along with men like Bill Guarnere and Heffron, Sergeant Talbot, Toye, Perconte, Webster and Doc. Rowe and so many others of this special group of men who became a band of brothers.  *“(Paul Fussell, in***Wartime***, writes that the soldier going into combat the first time thinks to himself, ‘It can’t happen to me. I am too clever / agile / well-trained / good-looking / beloved / tightly laced, etc.’ That feeling soon gives way to ‘It can happen to me, and I’d better be more careful. I can avoid the danger by watching more prudently the way I take cover / dig in / expose my position by firing my weapon / keep extra alert at all times, etc.’ In his analysis, Winters gave credit to the Army for having prepared him so well for this moment (‘my apogee,’ he called it). He had done everything right, from scouting the position to laying down a base of covering fire, to putting his best men (Compton, Guarnere, and Malarkey in one group, Lipton and Ranney in the other) on the most challenging missions, to leading the charge personally at exactly the right moment. Winters felt that if Sobel had been in command, he would have led all thirteen men on a frontal assault and lost his life, along with the lives of most of the men. Who can say he was wrong about that? But then, who can say that the men of Easy would have had the discipline.”*Hearing/seeing the stories directly from the Toccoa men give great credibility to this work from the beginning. The one phrase most are familiar with and often attribute to Dick Winters actually came from one of his sergeants, *“In one of his last newsletters, Mike Ranney wrote: ‘In thinking back on the days of Easy Company, I’m treasuring my remark to a grandson who asked, ‘Grandpa, were you a hero in the war?’  ‘No,’ I answered, ‘but I served in a company of heroes.’ ”*I get goose bumps every time I read or hear this phrase for these men were heroes true American heroes that have all pass over and taken the last “jump”.
58. **MERCY (The Lost Warship Book 2),**by Daniel Gibbs (2023). Wow, what a mess David has gotten the crew into this time…all with good intentions of course. And we all know where good intentions often take us. They came close to causing Armageddon by their presence just a bit ago. But making good choices and decisions was able to actually save this culture from almost total annihilation. So now we see Gen. David Cohen, who is not usually rash in his decision making, but being too desperate to get home and on top of that they are running low on fuel Helium-3, as they are seeking the Ones who brought them to this galaxy 4.5 million light years away from home, making a decision that almost winds up imprisoning a few of his most prized crew men for a lifetime. Of course, “almost” is the operative word. So after leaving their Marines to help with the on-going terrorist problem the go in search from much needed fuel. So they begin to scan for a system that would have a gas giant with the helium-3 they need and after finding it, decide, since their instruments told them that the aliens in this system were not capable of FTL, to quietly slip in and take it from giant in their system. Best laid plans…Oh well. The people who lay claim to this quadrant of the galaxy are space capable and see this as a breaking of the laws and they hold their law above all other things.  Mercy is not a part of their vocabulary. After tying to explain he challenges them from an archaic section of their Law to combat, of course.  Will he win? Will they make friends with this legalistic society on steroids? Will they get their Helium-3? What is David meant to learn after this encounter?
59. **PRIDE OF THE FLEET (The Ixan Prophecies book 5,**by Scott Bartlett (2019). One of the things I find fascinating about modern sci-fi writers is their imagination concerning  a lot of things but their apparent mastery of technology that is not even around yet and make it sound so believable. Like this riff: *“My main assumption is that each universe will be structured the same way—that is, a series of interconnected branes, subspace being one of them. If that’s true, then a quantum engine can be devised in such a way that it exists in both subspace and realspace simultaneously. That involves setting up the engine so that, once programmed, it’s unobservable by the pilot until each command can be executed. The spherical wormhole that sends the engine to subspace must also be concealed—you see, for the quantum engine to work, whether or not the wormhole is generated must depend on a quantum event that has a fifty-fifty chance of occurring within a given timeframe, much like Schrödinger’s famous cat. And if the pilot is able to observe the engine or the wormhole, the event will simply resolve one way or another, which won’t work for our purposes. For this to work, we need the engine to reside in realspace and subspace simultaneously.: ‘I’m lost. But continue.’ “At the moment the wormhole does or doesn’t appear, the engine will fire a photon at an atom in the necessary configuration, along a preprogrammed trajectory. Because the engine exists in both subspace and realspace, it takes advantage of subspace’s decoherence-free nature while transporting the ship located in realspace into another realspace. That is, another universe.”*Now I know sci-fi writers of old blended scientific imagination with cultural philosophies but this new breed of writers seems to take these to the next level. Now to the story, at hand. Things are going from good to bad with Teth at the helm of the Progenitor’s trek to take over the universe…or is it his vendetta against Husher that plays on the “mind” of this mixed entity? The mystery continues. But wait, at just the right time a new ally shows up!  The Quatro are different to say the least…almost spider like but powerful in weaponry and say they are there to help with the Progenitor problem. There are other issues with them that seem to evolve throughout the book. But the major one is how quickly the IU saddles up with them and how the values of the IU seem to be moving in the same direction of separation from inferior species or even their own race that they don’t agree with.  Free speech is becoming a thing of the past in the IU as they seek to battle the Progenitors they are battling amongst themselves making them more and more vulnerable to the enemy.  The enemy within is usually worse than the enemy without. But, it would seem that Teth has in hands in both places while he pursues Husher. Husher not knowing who and what are the enemies of mankind and freedom does begins to do what his predecessor Capt. Keyes did and take the bull by the horns and step out on his own to make things right and fight the true enemy…the Progenitors.  Ochrim has come up with new technology that could help in this fight if they can use it well and on time. And then there is the issue of who or what Fesky runs into when she finds herself in the Progenitors home space…or is it the Sol System…is she even in the right universe?
60. **FORGIVE: Why Should I and How Can I?,**by Timothy Keller (2022). This has been an amazing read and a slow read, for a few of reasons for me.  One, the material here is not found in this format anywhere else that I am familiar with. Next, because I have been sent to my knees in heartfelt confession of how badly I have understood this important doctrine of God. And third, these are the words of a dying man (at the time…now has gone home to be with the LORD)…but not just any dying man but one of the “giants” of the faith in the 20 and 21st centuries for the Church and for the PCA. Like all the “giants” he would not have wanted to be talked about that way and also like the “giants” before him we all know he was not infallible and we are free to disagree with him on some things. Finally, like the “giants” before him he was a man of God in the Reformed tradition and commitment, raised up for a time such as this and one to whom God gave plenty to speak into his church and the Church worldwide.  I am extremely thankful for this faithful witness. His ability to parse the scriptures for its clear meaning is seen in this book as well, *“Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above . . . by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on’ (Mark 2: 4). To everyone’s shock, Jesus did not at first heal his paralysis. Instead ‘when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’ (verse 5). For a moment imagine yourself as the paralyzed man. You would have felt (and if you had a bold personality you might have said), ‘Uh, thanks—but isn’t it obvious I have a more urgent need here?’ And if you had said that, Jesus would have answered, ‘No, you don’t.’ It’s likely that the man had been feeling, ‘If I could just walk again—then I’d be happy. I’d never complain. I’d be content.’ But Jesus, as it were, is saying: ‘Look around you at all these people—they can all walk. Are their hearts all filled with contentment? Are they all happy? If I only heal you, you will be overjoyed for a while, but then you will become like everyone else.’ No. What the man needed was forgiveness. Forgiveness gets down to the bottom of things—to the alienation we feel from God and from ourselves because of our wrongdoing. Jesus was saying: ‘I want to show you that the deepest need of your nature is for me. Only I can bestow perfect love, new identity, endless comfort, hope, and glory. And the doorway into all of that is to know forgiveness.’ It’s time to open that door and walk through it.”*And after he sets clearly the foundation of this book he proceeds to parse the cultural understandings of forgiveness which we all, even in the church, fall into from time to time but are entirely wrong from a biblical perspective. *“So we see three approaches to forgiveness that have emerged in our secular society: Cheap grace. The nonconditional-forgiveness model, in which all the emphasis is on the victim being therapeutically liberated from anger. Confrontation with the perpetrator may be involved, but only if and to the degree it helps with the victim’s inner healing, which is the only real concern. Little grace. The transactional-forgiveness model, in which all the emphasis is on the perpetrator meriting forgiveness. The victim gives up anger only if the wrongdoer earns it through extensive acts of repentance and reparation. No grace. The no-forgiveness model, in which forgiveness is abandoned completely in favor of the pursuit of justice for the victim. What these models have in common is the lack of any vertical dimension. They all contrast with the costly grace model of forgiveness assumed in the Bible, which has both a horizontal and vertical dimension to it. Before proceeding to examine this biblical model in later chapters, it is important to recognize the background beliefs and assumptions in our culture that support these three approaches to forgiveness.”*He then speaks of a counseling session he wants had where he wrapped it up by saying, *“She told me that she refused to ever forgive him for that. My counterpoint went something like this: ‘Yes, he did you wrong, but if you don’t forgive him the way Jesus forgave you, you will actually give him power over you. You will do things not because they are the best things to do but because in your heart you know your father wouldn’t like them. You will not do other things because you know your father would like them. I’ve seen this happen with other kids. I don’t want it to happen to you.’ To my surprise, it made perfect sense to her. ‘I never thought of it like that,’ she said.”*As you can tell by the length of this review this was an amazing book…but I have to leave you with one more quote that I think is extremely appropriate to this discussion, *“Martin Luther King Jr. wrote: ‘He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power of love. . . . We can never say, ‘I will forgive you, but I won’t have anything further to do with you.’ Forgiveness means reconciliation, and coming together again.” Thinkers like this make a compelling case that to be a healthy society—one in which broken relationships can be regenerated—we must learn forgiveness.”*
61. **Encouragement: Ultimate Hope & Encouragement for Hard Times**by Charles Spurgeon (R.P.B. Northern Publishing Company 2018). This book is put together as a daily devotional and captures many of the hundreds of devotionals Spurgeon wrote in his life time. These are mini-messages with such power. ***“I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.-Isaiah 48: 10.****Dear Believers who are experiencing trouble right now, comfort yourself with this thought: God says, ‘I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.’ Doesn’t this message come like a soft shower, quenching the fury of the flame? Yes! It’s like fireproof armor, against which the heat has no power. Let troubles and afflictions come—God has chosen me. Poverty, you may walk right in at my door, but God is in the house already, and He has chosen me. Sickness, you may intrude, but I have medicine ready—God has chosen me. Whatever happens to me in this valley of tears, I know that He has ‘chosen’ me. If, Dear Believer, you require even greater comfort, remember that you have the Son of Man with you in the furnace. In that silent room of yours, there is sitting by your side One whom you have not seen, but whom you love; and oftentimes when you are not even aware, He lovingly makes your bed in your affliction, and smooths your pillow for you. You are in poverty; but in that lovely house of yours the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor. He loves to come into these lonely, desolate places in order to visit you. Your friend sticks closely to you. You cannot see Him, but you might feel the pressure of His hands. Don’t you hear His voice?—Even in the valley of the shadow of death, He says, ‘Don’t be afraid, for I am with you; don’t be discouraged, for I am your God.’ Remember those encouraging words of Julius Caesar: ‘Fear not—you carry Caesar and all his fortune.’ And in a far greater way, Christian, don’t be afraid—Jesus is with you! In all your fiery trials, His presence is both your comfort and safety. He will never leave anyone whom He has chosen for His own. ‘Don’t be afraid, for I am with you,’ is His certain message of promise to His chosen ones in the ‘furnace of affliction.’ Won’t you then, hold on tightly to Christ, and say—‘Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I’ll follow where He goes.’”*This is a Kindle Unlimited book that I am keeping for a while because re-reading these are extremely encouraging!
62. **WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE,**(eBook) by Nathan Pitchford, Copyright © 2011. Interestingly enough that is exactly what it is a book of scriptures broken down in categories to biblical show the validity of the doctrines of grace. It has taken me a while to navigate through this but this is certainly a most helpful source in future discussions on the doctrines of grace. He says, *“God has recently given us the opportunity to discuss some theological issues with other Christians who believe differently than we do on a number of points, most notably the doctrines of grace. In such a circumstance, given the overwhelming supply of scriptural evidence that comes to bear on the topic, it seemed to me that the best approach would be a simple categorized scripture list: the fact that the entire paper would be scriptures, with the exception of a few brief explanatory notes, would underscore the truth that this is God's own word and teaching; and the fact that it would be categorized would facilitate the ready comparison of scripture with scripture so as to lead one to a full-orbed understanding of the biblical teaching.”*After a full consideration of the passages that he has chosen…this may be the best of such books written to date. Is it exhaustive on this subject? No, because it is only 75 pages long…hard to put the whole of the Bible in 75 pages!
63. **A TREATISE OF REJOICING IN THE LORD IN ALL CASES AND CONDITIONS,** by Robert Asty (first published 1683; then by Monergism 2023). Robert Asty, English Puritan (1642 - October 14, 1681) was a dissenter like his father, also Robert Asty, who was ejected from his pulpit in 1662 for non-conformity.  Asty wrote this work, **A Treatise of Rejoicing in the Lord Jesus in All Cases and Conditions** based on Habakkuk 3:17-18- ***“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.”*** The main interest is actually verse 18- ***“…yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation”,***as it is the main verse from which he expounds 12 sermons. This was his one main contribution to the continuing Church for he died at the age of 39. He had 4 main points that he spread out over 12 sermons to the congregation in Norwich, in his own words: 1. What the Lord Jesus Christ is to, and doth for Believing Souls; which may be a constant ground of their Joy and Rejoicing. 2. What are the grounds of that Darkness which is upon Believers about their interest in Christ, hindering the Rejoicing. 3. What Believers should do in the interim, until that can have the evidence of their Interest clear.4. How Souls may know their Interest in Jesus Christ. I wanted to like this book and there were many enlightening and encouraging sections to be sure but his ***ad nauseum*** approach to say everything…  literally everything that can be said…just got boring after a while. This is definitely one of those CLASSICS that need to be modernized and updated and abridged…for he literally says many of the same things in each sermon preached. When defining the type of Joy Habakkuk is speaking about he says, *“That word also is very full, and it signifies in its grammatical sense, my heart shall leap or skip for joy: My heart shall sally forth in my God, and take heart in the Lord who never fails: I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation. One of the Ancients speaking upon this Text, saith, Although, saith he, all the Elements should threaten us, and conspire and swear as it were a Confederacy against us, to turn us out of all, yet,****Ego exultabo in Deo****; I will rejoice in my God, even in the God of my Salvation.”*And he ends with this excellent summary; *“And therefore O Christians! let me in the winding up of all once more call upon you to live upon, and to glory in Christ Jesus alone: As to all your comforts in this world, you cannot promise yourselves they shall abide with you; God may empty you from vessel to vessel, till he have taken all these away; but now there is enough in a naked Jesus to take comfort in; there is enough in Jesus Christ alone for you to glory in. O come and draw your comforts from Christ, and do not draw them from the creature; do not draw them from secondary helps, but draw them from the fountain; do not sit down at the streams, but away to the fountain, to the Ocean that is always full. In every strait have your eye upon Jesus; in every cross keep your eye upon Jesus; in every loss keep your eye upon Jesus; under every strait and trial have recourse to Jesus, and acquaint yourselves more with Him, that you may be in the prophets frame here, To rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of your Salvation.”*
64. **DOGS OF WAR: A SPACE OPERA EPIC Ixan Prophesies Book 6,**by Scott Bartlett(2019).  What a way to conclude a blockbuster series.  The war to end all wars is in process.  Vin Husher and his crew are the tip of the spear against the Progenitors and his own government that are so corrupt and the people because they have sought to divide themselves with so many prejudices. It seems like he is one man and a crew that stand alone. And that becomes more evident when he finds out what is in the Progenitor’s realm which is an alternate universe with matching people on both sides with Teth pulling the strings in both realities from frontal assaults to backdoor scheming and conniving even among Husher’s own people. At one point given the platform he has he had to speak to the conditions of the people (sounds eerily like our own today); *“I happen to believe that it is possible for inequality to grow so much that it destabilizes a society. That happened when Darkstream perverted the democracy of the old Commonwealth. But the answer isn’t to take from those who’ve worked hard, or even from those who’ve simply been fortunate. The answer is to work to lift up everyone in poverty, a rising tide that doesn’t pick and choose based on identity. Our society’s downfall isn’t the government’s fault. Not really. It isn’t even the Progenitors’ fault. It’s your fault. Yours. If you deny that, then you’re no better than the ones filled with resentment, who refuse to take any responsibility for their lives. This society is dying because you refused to speak up when you saw your neighbor cast low. It’s because you wouldn’t say anything to oppose the things you knew were wrong, the things that sprang out of a poisonous ideology. During this war, we’ve learned the true identity of the Progenitors. They are humanity, a version of humanity that let themselves fall into darkness. In their universe, Darkstream’s power was never broken, and it almost destroyed them. Except, they survived the universe-shattering cataclysm that followed, and their ordeal left their souls drenched in bitterness and resentment. But the Progenitors could just as easily have turned out to be Wingers, or Tumbra, or Kaithe, or Fins, or Gok, or Quatro. In one sense, we are the Progenitors. All of us. Because each one of us is capable of letting resentment take over and drive our actions. Even if you think you’ve been doing good—even if you believe you fight for the less fortunate—you* *need to take a hard look at yourself. Take out your ideological lenses”*See what I mean about catching our times well? But as with humanity historically is, when its back is against the wall it is then that it takes a moment to evaluate itself like Jake Price, *“He began to feel like humanity wasn’t just his species, but his soul. And after Husher’s speech to everyone who’d gathered together in that system, Jake had even begun to identify with the IU as a whole, despite their corruption and folly. I guess this is exactly how you want to feel, when the chips are down. Each fighter wasn’t just part of the whole, they were the whole, and they fought hard for base survival.”*But the bigger question is how does it all end?  This series was really good…and I mean really good… but this may be the last that I read by the author as I was not overly impressed with where the **Spacer’s Series** was going. But wait…there is yet another series with most of the characters in it that I just found out about…called THE FLEET OPS Series.  So stay tuned! Yay!
65. **SPACE RAIDERS,**by Ken Lozito (2023). This is delightfully a new series for me to start from one of my favorite authors.  This book does not at all disappoint.  It is a wild ride from the moment you jump in. This plot begins in modern day like an Indiana Jones Raiders of the lost ark kind of thing. The lead, Nathan Briggs, is seeking information on an artifact that an old friend, turned nemesis, is also looking for…or maybe just waiting for Indy…whoops ..I mean Nate…to get so he can remove it from him after Nate does all the hard work. Anyway this operation goes sideways as they usually do and all including innocence gets caught up in galactic intrigue that the humans didn’t even know existed. Like so many of the books I read men are men and women are …well,  they are not damsels in distress since they can usually kick butt and take names as well…but there is heavy emphasis on chivalry even if the gesture is not appreciated or wanted at the moment. There is also clearly two genders… even among aliens…that is refreshing as well. They seriously get thrust into a life and death gambit filled with different alien, abduction, space ships and energy weapons all trained upon them it seems…to overcome that requires all of Nate’s skill and charm along with the help of his new alien “friends” who only have him and his friends from earth around because they carry something within them that is highly prized by the good guys and the bad…Nate just hasn’t figured out who they are yet. *“I clenched my teeth a little and blew out a breath. I just wanted to get out of here—away from everyone here—but it was becoming much harder than I’d thought it was going to be. Kaz wasn’t the only one who was in over his head. I didn’t trust the alien captain, but I was hoping he had a clear path forward, something I could work with. Now, I had the feeling that just wasn’t the case. If he didn’t know what he was doing, what hope did the rest of us have for getting back home?”* But along the way…it is a non-stop “romp of adventure”. Lozito once again does it and I for one am glad to see old school heroes and villains in a galaxy full of unknowns. Sci-fi at its best.
66. **VALOR (The Lost Warship Book 3),**by Daniel Gibbs (2023). In this new galaxy Sextans B, *The* *Lion of Judah* and her crew, guided by General David Cohen, seems destined to roam from one conflict after another in search for that illusive path home…4.5 million light years away. As home is on every one’s mind the general keeps searching from one solar system after another to no avail except to encounter beings that seem bent on killing them before they can get home. They have ventured in the latest system that looked like it held promise only to find it totally deserted of all carbon based life and any minerals whatsoever and it has all been done thousands of years ago…which leaves many unanswered questions. But, meanwhile, back on Zeivlot, Col. Demood is keeping two people from continuously seeking to wipe each other out and he is having a pretty prosperous time of taking out bad guys until this latest attempt that seems to be going to cause a planet wide extinction  engineered by terrorists that will not be stopped. While this is going on the *Lion* encounters a mechanized entity that sends chills of fear up the spines of all that see it. The biggest problem with this force is that it seems impervious to CDF weaponry and it is seeking the same things that The Lion seeks…so the clash is epic and heart rendering all at the same time for something happens that causes the general to break every oath he holds dear or witness the destruction of all life in the new universe in which they reside. Along with this entity they encounter a space faring culture who had been displaced by this entity and they wish to have *The Lion* pony up its weaponry irregardless of CDF regulations to share technology. Tensions abound and when they seem to be the lowest the ship pulls together to make things happen, *“Someone had taken the time to hang the motto of CDF Intelligence on an empty wall. The banner read: In God We Trust. All Others, We Monitor. Like many others, she found the motto amusing, and reassuring.”*The emphasis on faith in Daniel’s books is very refreshing.  As I have said before it adds a dimension and a depth that other books…namely sci-fi…do not have and don’t try to have this losing the soul of people in my opinion. People are more “real” with the discussion of religion or no religion in the midst of all of life. Hence how easy it is to cozy up to even an atheist Dr. Haywood in these books.
67. **THE SICK MAN’S COMFORT BOOK,**by Philip Bennett Power, 1822-1899,  (originally 1876- Monergism digitalized 2023).  This book seeks to do two things that we don’t see very often today speak of sickness and suffering and advocate for supporting a missionary retreat center he helped start. Many speak of this as being a book to help give comfort to the ill and bedridden in their times of trouble…and it is…but his chapters on God as our comfort are especially significant for us today as so much dissolution with life abounds. Think **DON’T WASTE YOUR CANCER** by John Piper. There was so much more in the book than talking about his cancer.  He says at the start, *“Blessed Lord, this is a****Sick Man’s Comfort Book****; and that it may be so indeed, first we must be sure of what Thou art. O Thou most worthy judge eternal, we have no comfort in ourselves, and unless Thou hadst revealed Thyself as a comforting God we could have had none in Thee. Thy justice, and power, and majesty, are no comfort to us if they are alone, for we are only vile earth, and miserable sinners; it is what Thou tellest us of Thyself that gives us any joy. We would not presume to look for comfort in the direction of Thyself, if Thou hadst not pointed out to us the way; but now that Thou hast done this; from Thee, and the things concerning Thee alone, shall come our comfort and our peace.”*The first 3 chapters are focused on God as our Comfort asking the question is He our comfort at all, showing us hindrances to our believing Him to be our comfort and then giving helps so we can believe that God is the God of comfort. After showing us in the Scriptures that God really is the God of comfort (something we need to be constantly reminded is) he sets before us a plan that ends up helping us to believe it with all our hearts. *“Now, one of the most effectual ways of getting rid of these hindrances is to track them out, and ascertain from whence they come. I have no doubt many of them come from certain depraved thinkings about God; and consequently, the helps should come from thinkings also, only of the right kind. We must keep close to thoughts of God. We must meet Satan's dark thoughts and suggestions about God, with bright thoughts about Him. For if we do not, he will always be able to bring God up terribly against us. However we may divert our minds, the evil one will always keep saying, ‘But ah, what about God? All is not right with Him; and what is more, all never can be.’* …*I consider then God's character as my great help to believing Him to be a God of Comfort. And first of all from the mere fact of His being generous, He is very likely to be a God of Comfort. Everywhere in Scripture He is represented to us as a large hearted God. He is One that hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but would rather that he turned from his iniquity and lived. He says,****'Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it'—that 'the sins and iniquities of His people He will remember no more.'****How much more generous God is than man, you have remarkably set before you in what He says to the prophet Jeremiah in chapter iii****—‘Hast thou seen what backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto Me.’"***After this stage is set, he gives us 9 chaptersconcerning how this comfort helps us in times of pain, uncertainty, confusion and preparation for *“departure”* from this life. This book is a gem and the Church ought to be thankful for its re-discovery from among almost lost archives. OH, as I said, at the end of the book he gives a push for those who read this book to support with a little or a lot the Sea-side Missionary Retreat Center as a place for missionaries and their wives to come and be restored to health…spiritually, emotionally, and physically because of the kinds of conditions they were ministering in in the bowels of London…going so far as talking about setting up “endowments” something I had never seen before. Interesting concept and a much-needed practice even today.
68. **IDENTITY THEFT: Reclaiming the Truth of Who We Are in Christ**, edited by Melissa Kruger, Copyright © 2018 by The Gospel Coalition. This excellent work has many contributors by wise women of God worthy of our attention Like: Melissa Kruger, Megan Hill, Courtney Doctor, Betsy Childs and 6 others of like mindedness in Christ. There is so much discussion concerning identity today starting with the basic question, “Who am I.” For the Christian, the question should be, “Who does the Bible say I am in Christ?  This should be a simple answer for the believer (since the answer is in the question.) but as we see around us in the church and outside the church so many wander aimlessly not knowing this answer listening to other voices telling them they are in charge of who they are and that we can be anything we want. Is that good, caring or even loving advice? Well, to a woman, they would all agree that this s destructive advise and words of folly and even immensely unloving. Rosaria Butterfield said this about this book; *“In a secular world that boasts 50 sexual identities—or 500 by the printing of this commendation—we see that there is no more vital topic for Christians to understand than what identity in Christ means and does. We must ask ourselves: what is the relationship between my deepest feelings and my sovereign God? Do my compelling desires tell me who I am or how I am? The essays in****Identity Theft****are witty, engaging, accessible, and insightful, with helpful memory verses and study questions, encouraging readers to resist the identity theft of secular modernism and instead to grow in union with Christ.”*I really liked this authors point when describing our identity in Christ, she said, *“Maybe you, too, have found salvation mystifying. Maybe you’ve wondered, If I’m really saved, why don’t I feel fully free? Well, you’re not yet fully free, but you will be. Our complete freedom from sin is certain, but it’s not sudden. So we rest confidently in our justification, we labor diligently in our sanctification, and we hope expectantly in our glorification. Be assured of your justification.****It was.****One day, you were freed fully from the penalty of sin. Be patient with your sanctification.****It is.****Each day, you are being freed increasingly from the power of sin. Be eager for your glorification.****It is to come****. One day, you will be freed finally from the presence of sin. For today, remember: Christ is in you and you are in him. Your identity is securely anchored even as you are increasingly being transformed. Sister in Christ, live each day in the joyful certainty that****‘if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed’ (John 8:36)****.”* And while this book was written for women it is just as true for men who have seemingly lost their way or had it stripped from them by a culture set against anything that smacks of God’s design. Again like with many other women’s books the study questions are superb for individual study or for a small group study.  This is a book that everyone in the church needs to be familiar with.
69. **THE HARDENING OF THE HEART,** by Thomas Manton (DIGITALLY BY Monergism 2023) In this adaptation we find 2 of Dr. Manton’s sermon on **Exodus 4:21-** ***“And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.”*** This is a subject that few discuss today widely. In fact, in my early years I remember clearly that when I would talk about God hardening the hearts of the non-believer and at least, a partial hardening of the hearts of believers I was told that I needed to go back and study some more because God wouldn’t do such a thing. Since some of these men were men I respected I did exactly as they requested I came away with the same position that I had before…except now with a greater understanding of God’s work in His wrath and God’s work in His discipline…one for judgment and the other for the expressed purpose of making us more and more into the image of His Son or Savior Jesus Christ…for God never disciplines us out of His wrath but always out of His steadfast love for us. This particular book deals with the hardening of non-believers in the way one would expect but it is the shorter section of the partial hardening of the hearts of believers is worth the price of the whole book. For the non-believer he says in short; *“There is an active providence that arranges and presents such objects that, when encountered by a wicked heart, make it harder. God turns the best things that the wicked enjoy into stumbling blocks and means of their downfall and destruction. Sometimes, it is through natural comforts****(Jeremiah 6:2)****. By handing them over. He delivers them into the power of Satan, who works upon their corrupt nature and hardens it. Satan stirs them up as the executor of God's curse, just as the evil spirit had permission to deceive Ahab****(1 Kings 22:21-22).****There is a permissive intention, not an effective one; Satan is the efficient instrument, while God is the judge. God permits Satan to incite and stir up their evil natures. They grieve His Spirit, and then God withdraws and leaves them to an evil spirit, as in the case of Saul****(1 Samuel 16:14)****.”*For the believer it is always a partial hardening for the purpose of growth and reconciliation. *“There may be a withdrawal of grace, although some tenderness remains in the understanding, discerning between good and evil, in the dissatisfied conscience, and in the will that acknowledges God's ways. There is a general intent to please Him in all things. Nevertheless, the heart becomes lifeless and dull, lacking a disposition for holy things. They become less aware of the evil of sin, less delighted in the Word, less hopeful, less inclined to pray, less patient in afflictions, and less satisfied in communion with God.”*He gives a list of reason why God must do this to His own. *“The causes of this condition are: [1.] Sinning against conscience.[2.] Grieving the Spirit: Ephesians 4:30 says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." All sin is a source of grief to the Spirit, especially immorality and bitterness. Compare this with verses 29 and 31, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Now, grieving the Spirit causes a significant rupture in our grace and comfort, as the Spirit is our sanctifier and comforter.[3.] Carnal freedom. When a person indulges the flesh excessively, the spirit or the better part of them becomes enslaved.****Psalm 119:37 says, ‘Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.’***[4.] *Carelessness and spiritual sloth.”*And of course being a good Puritan he gives us the means to the cure which comes from the power of the Spirit within us convicting and us turning…though He explains it so well…that every Christian ought to read this book.
70. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FEAR THE LORD?:  How the Fear of God Delights and Strengthens** by Michael Reeves (Union School of Theology in the UK; Crossway 2021). Our author has written two books for this Union Series…this one which is an appended version of **REJOICE AND TREMBLE: The Surprising Good News of the Fear of God.**The take away of this appended version as well as the longer version is this: God must be the object of our fear…a fear not marked with anxiety but by the enjoyment of God. He states, *“The one who fears the Lord, then, is not merely one who grudgingly attempts the outward action of keeping the Lord’s commandments. The one who truly fears the Lord greatly delights in God’s commandments! In other words, fear runs deeper than behavior: it drives behavior. Sinful fear hates God and therefore acts sinfully. Right fear loves God and therefore has a sincere longing to be like him.”* This shorter version actually just leaves out some fuller explanation and quotes by long dead but extremely important pastor theologians from the past. While significantly shorter it doesn’t seem to lose any of its flow or impact to its theme! The next long quote sums up the depth of this book well, *“But the fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of knowledge of God. It is also the beginning of true knowledge of ourselves. In the light of God’s holiness and majesty I understand how puny, vicious, and pathetic I am. In other words, I do not have a true knowledge of myself if I do not fear God. Without that fear, my self-perception will be wildly distorted by my pride. It is when we are most thrilled with God that our masks slip and we see ourselves for what we really are: creatures, sinners, forgiven, adopted. The fear of the Lord is also the beginning of wisdom****(Prov. 9: 10).****But it is a very unexpected guide to wisdom. When we look for wisdom, we look to intelligence. We struggle to distinguish between intelligence and wisdom. Which is odd, given how the world is littered with clever fools. We need the fear of God to steer our abilities, and without it, all our abilities are a liability. Take the brilliant young theological thug online: he may just be as bright as he thinks he is, but his untempered ability only makes him more dangerous… Here is truth for every Christian who needs the strength to rise above his or her anxieties, or who needs the strength to pursue an unpopular but righteous course. The fear of the Lord is the only fear that imparts strength. And the strength this fear gives is—uniquely—a humble strength. Those who fear God are simultaneously humbled and strengthened before his beauty and magnificence. Thus they are kept gentle and preserved from being overbearing in their strength. All of us are temperamentally inclined to lean one way or another. Some are natural rhinos: strong and thick-skinned, but not gentle. Others are more like deer: sweet and gentle, but nervous and flighty. The fear of the Lord corrects and beautifies both temperaments, giving believers a gentle strength. It makes them—like Christ—simultaneously lamblike and lionlike.”* I read the longer version alongside it again just to make sure I didn’t miss anything for this subject needs more study on my part.
71. **REJOICE AND TREMBLE: The Surprising Good News of the Fear of God,**by Michael Reeves (2021). We all know that fear is one is one of the strongest human emotions. It is also one of the subjects that often confuse us as Christians. How are we to understand the fear of the Lord as a good and necessary thing when fear of something is defined as something we would normally run away from? The Church is often so confused that many times we pass over it or refuse to talk about it making **IT** the problem. ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,” wrote Solomon (Prov. 1: 7),****for the fear of the Lord gives believers a knowledge no natural-born genius ever has. Since Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, mankind has chased a particular sort of knowledge: knowledge without God. But the more we have pursued that knowledge, the more filled with fears we have become. We tremble at the terrifying size of the universe and despair at the dark complexity of the human psyche. Without God, more knowledge has not meant more happiness and satisfaction; it has left modern man feeling adrift on a vast sea of fears. At the same time, all that long quest for knowledge has left us profoundly ignorant: ignorant of the Maker and so the very logic of reality, and ignorant of who we are and who we were made to be. Human reason, therefore, neither approaches, nor strives toward, nor even takes a straight aim at, this truth: to understand who the true God is or what sort of God he wishes to be toward us.’ ”* Too many have said that the Bible is confusing at best on this subject but Dr. Reeves following in the long line of other like Charles Spurgeon, John Bunyan, John Flavel and Jonathan Edwards has shown us in his book that it is not the Bible that is confusing but the influence of our modern definitions that confuse us so we don’t tremble before the God of Heaven. *“In the presence of the Lord, everyone trembles. Before him, Abraham, Joshua, David, Ezekiel, Daniel, Paul, and John all fell on their faces****(Gen. 17: 3; Josh. 5: 14; 1 Chron. 21: 16; Ezek. 1: 28; Dan. 8: 17; Acts 9: 4; Rev. 1: 17)****. Overcome by the tremendousness of his glory, people are so overwhelmed, they think they will die****(Judg. 13: 20–22).****But it is not just people who tremble. In Isaiah’s vision of the Lord enthroned in the temple,****‘the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called’******(Isa. 6: 4).****And it doesn’t stop there: at his appearing, the mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it.****(Nah. 1: 5)****For he is the one ‘****who looks on the earth and it trembles.’ (Ps. 104: 32)****. It should be no surprise, then, that all things will shake and tremble at the second coming of Christ. At Sinai****‘his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens’ (Heb. 12: 26).****But what sort of trembling is this that will grip the universe? For the heavens and the earth, it is clearly a trembling of exultation. Thus, when David brought the ark/ throne of God to Jerusalem, he sang of the day that event prefigured:****Tremble before him, all the earth; yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, “The Lord reigns!” Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! (1 Chron. 16: 30–34; see also Ps. 96: 11–13)****The earth shakes with pleasure, for it is joining in with the joy of believers as their filial fear swells with delight at the presence of their God.”* So Dr. Reeves wants us to have a working definition of the correct fear of God so he puts it this way, *“A working definition of what it is to****Fear the Lord****. -**How easily we can mistake the reality of the fear of God for an outward and hollow show!  As Martin Luther put it: “To fear God is not merely to fall upon your knees. Even a godless man and a robber can do that.” Scripture presents the fear of God as a matter of the heart’s inclinations. So, reads****Psalm 112:1- “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!”****The one who fears the Lord, then, is not merely one who grudgingly attempts the outward action of keeping the Lord’s commandments. The one who truly fears the Lord greatly delights in God’s commandments! In other words, fear runs deeper than behavior: it drives behavior. Sinful fear hates God and therefore acts sinfully. Right fear loves God and therefore has a sincere longing to be like him.”*This book is not as readable but just as stimulating as Dane Ortland’s book, **GENTLE AND LOWLY**, in this series from Union School of Theology in Oxford, but what it has to offer is worth the work to get through it. The purpose for both of these books is for believers to experience a deeper enjoyment of the relationship they have been given through Christ.
72. **DIVINE EFFICACY WITHOUT HUMAN POWER,**by Edward Reynolds, (originally published in 1660 –Monergism Copyright © 2023). This sermon, **Divine Efficacy Without Human Power** began as a sermon Preached at St. Margaret's Church in Westminster before the Right Honorable the House of COMMONS, June 28, 1660. This was the day of solemn Thanksgiving for the happy Return of the Kings Majesty Charles II., by Edward Reynolds D. D. and Chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty. Expanded and then printed (70 or so pages)by Tho. Ratcliffe, for George Thomason at the Rose and Crown in St. Paul 's Church-yard, 1660. He took as his main text **Zechariah 4:6- *“Then he replied and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.”***  This is a sermon for the history books. 1660 is the year of the Restoration of the Monarchy as this sermon so illustrates …So obviously this Anglican Priest turn Presbyterian during the Commonwealth under Cromwell, turn Anglican priest again, was in the end an absolute monarchist…though he would come to learn that Charles II religious tolerance positions were more in line with the Roman Catholic Church than the Church of England, though he served the king faithfully until his death in 1676. (The King, himself, would die in 1685 after abolishing the parliament.) Oliver Cromwell had died leaving his son Richard to become Lord Protectorate but he was wholly inadequate to the task and Parliament went looking for Charles II in France to restore him to the throne with a promise of amnesty for “rebels” and religious tolerance…not freedom of religion! Our author’s doctrines of grace and his doctrine of the church are impeccable but his doctrine of the magistrate is extremely Old Testament but then the divine right of the king to rule also included his divine right to be the head of the Church under Christ similar to the Pope but certainly not the same. Just to be clear, this his is an absolute position on God’s sovereignty, *“The Church, or Christ's Mystical Body, owes its origin and propagation not to human power, but entirely to the Spirit of God. The origins of the Church are divine and spiritual, born not of human will but from God, as John 1:13 and John 3:5, 6 suggest. It's a kingdom not of this world, as indicated in John 18:36”*He says, of the rulers of England, *“It falls to you, Right Honourable, and the other ranks of the Kingdom, to repair our divisions and restore paths to dwell in. Accomplish this as it ought to be done, and there will certainly be nothing more conducive to settling our tranquillity, establishing government, reuniting the fragmented and divided hearts of the people, and edifying the Church, which concerns all wise and good men far more than any individual, domestic or separated interest. You are not without guidance in the Text for this significant task. You are the people's fathers, and therefore must care for the souls of those to whom you are so closely related. You are God's Ministers for our good, Rom. 13:4. Hence, you certainly should not neglect our chief good. We are instructed to pray for you so that we may lead peaceful and tranquil lives in all godliness and decency, 1 Tim. 2:2. You should continually have the book of the Law before you, Deut. 17:18-19, not only to abide by it yourselves but also to ensure others do the same. You should be a nurturing Father to the Church, Isa. 49:23. God's people are promised that they will nurse at the breasts of Kings, Isa. 60:16.”*While these two doctrinal statements are in actual opposition biblically and logically…for those who serve an earthly king…many actually, it makes sense to them.
73. **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING,**by J.R.R. Tolkien, (50th Anniversary edition, 2004, 1st published in Britian1954). A long time ago I considered Jerram Barrs advice and have been re-reading these classics…this time same edition but the Kindle version saving my 50th Anniversary Edition from too much use…every couple of years.  As I have said before, Tolkien’s Middle-earth books are stimulating reads…some harder than others, which engage my mind much like the Bible does. The fullness of the story has been a delight to read once again…I have been able to see clearer the story and intent of its author seeking to remind people and cultures of things we have lost along the way…important things like basic civilities and hospitality and fortitude and strength of character things that used to be highly prized in a civilized society. Tolkien obviously believed in the depravity of men, but he also saw the worth of men who are guided by a higher principle and how worthy they are to follow and imitate. *“Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?’ ‘Such questions cannot be answered,’ said Gandalf. ‘You may be sure that it was not for any merit that others do not possess: not for power or wisdom, at any rate. But you have been chosen, and you must therefore use such strength and heart and wits as you have.’”*A good reminder even for us today.  This particular tale **The Fellowship of the Ring**…the first of 3 books for the novice or the first 2 books for the hardcore reader, looks at these qualities along with the weaknesses of men….but it is the strength found in likeminded though imperfect men banded together…a band of brothers…on a common quest for the good of others that rises above all. *“‘Tell me, Legolas, why did I come on this Quest? Little did I know where the chief peril lay! Truly Elrond spoke, saying that we could not foresee what we might meet upon our road. Torment in the dark was the danger that I feared, and it did not hold me back. But I would not have come, had I known the danger of light and joy. Now I have taken my worst wound in this parting, even if I were to go this night straight to the Dark Lord. Alas for Gimli son of Glóin!’ ‘Nay!’ said Legolas. ‘Alas for us all! And for all that walk the world in these after-days. For such is the way of it: to find and lose, as it seems to those whose boat is on the running stream. But I count you blessed, Gimli son of Glóin: for your loss you suffer of your own free will, and you might have chosen otherwise. But you have not forsaken your companions, and the least reward that you shall have is that the memory of Lothlórien shall remain ever clear and unstained in your heart, and shall neither fade nor grow stale.’”*Together we prevail…alone we fail!  Failing is not an option so Sam and Frodo are off on the next part of the journey leaving the fellowship to find its own journey to save Middle-earth. Now I move onto **The Twin Towers.**
74. **TRAPPED, Fleet Ops Series Book 1,**by Scott Bartlett and Joshua James (2021). The war with the Progenitors is over…but is it? They had won…or had they? But all of the fighting exposed so many flaws in the Interstellar Union that is coming apart at the seams with each member species securing for its own rather than thinking of the whole…maybe that is how it has always been but this ruthless war exposed so much. As the Interstellar Union weakens others rise like the United Human Systems of which Captain Vin Husher is apart with his new destroyer the *UHS Relentless.*The looming questions even after the years that have transpired is what about the other super AI’s that the other Husher told them about? Are they trying to find a way out of their universe to come and invade the Milky Way universe? Well…a message comes interdimenionally from a universe far away…or maybe even from a different dimension, it is unknown…and of course, human curiosity moves the UHS to want to check it out.  A task force headed by Admiral Ivers with Husher at the front of the battlegroup go interdimenionally to the place of the origin of the distress call. They find themselves in the middle of a small universe that is being dominated by the Brood...parasites that destroy everything I their path.  Were these the ones who sent the message…is this a trap…since there is very little they can do to stop the Brood but when they go to jump interdimenionally something goes wrong and they are trapped. The meet a new species of aliens who are trying to fight this Brood as well…and along the way Fesky and Husher’s friendship begins to grow again.  A Good read with familiar characters if you have read the series before this one… **The IXAN Prophesy Series.**
75. **THE LORD’S PRAYER,**by A. W. Pink, (1886-1952- printed originally 1938- Copyright  Monergism © 2023). A. W. Pink was an English Christian evangelist and Biblical scholar known for his staunchly Calvinistic and Reformed teachings. One of the best things about Pink is his own words. Here is him explaining why this book is needed. *"After all that has been spoken and written by godly men on prayer, we need something better than that which is of mere human origin to guide us if we are to perform aright this essential duty. How ignorant and sinful creatures are to endeavor to come before the Most High God, how they are to pray acceptably to Him and to obtain from Him what they need, can be discovered only as the great Hearer of prayer is pleased to reveal His will to us. This He has done: (1) by opening up a new and living way of access into His immediate presence for the very chief of sinners; (2) by appointing prayer as the chief means of intercourse and blessing between Himself and His people; and (3) by graciously supplying a perfect pattern after which the prayers of His people are to be modeled."* In this book he does a great job in breaking down each section of the Lord’s prayer in a very simple but engaging way. He was never one to beat around the bush or mince his words so when speaking of the 5th petition, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”, he said to the first part, *“Now when we pray, ‘Forgive us our debts,’ we do not ask to be discharged from the duties we owe to God, but to be acquitted from our guilt, that is, to have the punishment due us remitted.”*And then to the second part he says, *“They who would rightly pray to God for pardon must pardon those who wrong them. We need to pray much for God to remove all bitterness and malice from our hearts against those who wrong us. But to forgive our debtors does not exclude our rebuking them, and, where public interests are involved, having them prosecuted. It would be my duty to hand over a burglar to a policeman, or to go to law against one who was able but who refused to pay me****(Rom. 13:1-8).****If a fellow citizen is guilty of a crime and I do not report it, then I become an accessory to that crime. I thus betray a lack of love for him and for society****(Lev. 19:17, 18)****.”* And he continues with such simple wisdom with the 6th and 7th petition, *“Christ Himself has left us an example that should encourage us to offer this petition, for in His intercession on our behalf we find Him saying, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). Observe how this explains to us the connection between the clause we are now considering and the one that precedes it. Christ did not pray absolutely that we should be exempted from temptation, for He knew that His people must expect assaults both from within and from without. Therefore, He asked not that we should be taken out of this world, but that we be delivered from the evil. To be kept from the evil of sin is a far greater mercy than to be kept from the trouble of temptation. But how far, it may be asked, has God undertaken to deliver us from evil? First, He keeps us from evil so far as it would be hurtful to our highest interests. Second, God prevents evil from gaining full dominion over us, so that we shall not totally and finally apostatize. Third, He rescues us from evil by an ultimate deliverance, when He removes us to heaven.*From the beginning to the “Amen” this prayer is compact but, oh so full of our heart as we, believing in God’s promises, secured in Christ Jesus, pray as Jesus taught us to pray.
76. **COVER FOR GLORY; A Biblical Defense for Head Coverings,**by Dale Partridge (2023). This is a book in defense of head coverings as the title says based on his presupposition that women must wear head coverings as it was the practice of the church in most places for over 1900 years. But to that I ask…so what? While church practice over the course of time is a weighty matter this cannot be a main consideration for a presupposition. Of course, he centers his discussion on **I Corinthians 11:2-16** as he should since there is nowhere else to go to in the whole Bible to make his point concerning head coverings. Now, before you get the idea that I think this guy is a quack I must admit that his short work on headship is very good and helpful along with his history of head coverings in the Church over 1900 years. He also, does a good job in defending the fact that this is not just a cultural issue of the time and place...for they had been wearing head covering before this… (possibly a carryover from their past religious experiences). But given how much time spent on seeking to prove the Church’s cultural use of this sign through the ages he makes it a cultural issue for the church. But the real question is this; Is what Paul talking about *prescriptive* in that he is mandating a particular sign to show the woman’s submission to her husband or men in general (when it comes to her father, if single, or the elders of the church) …or is it only *descriptive* as Paul makes the argument to the Corinthians of how far they have moved away from God’s design…on headship and gender roles that were established in creation? In the same way that Jesus uses foot washing descriptively as an example of the type of intimate service we are to do for one another…personal and sacrificial.  My take is that Paul seldom makes a big deal concerning cultural issues unless they specifically go against God revealed word…making allowances for conscience but, at the same time, he never misses a chance to bring people back…especially those who are slipping up in ways that are negatively affecting the relationships we are to be promoting rather than making anything contentious (vs. 16) by speaking of God’s expressed designs. We see him praising the Corinthians for following his teaching/traditions in vs.2 and then in verse 3 he uses the word ***“But”*** as if to say, you have forgotten this simple truth, ***“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.”***This is the main point in Paul’s rebuke, if you will; everything else is subordinate to this phrase. I wonder if the author being a large proponent of the house church movement might play into this assessment as well. But don’t hear me saying that what he is saying is him being deceptive. I believe he wholeheartedly believes he has found the “magic bullet” to put this subject to rest forever…but I am not convinced. I wanted to be, simply on the fact that there is such a long history in the Church. He also talks about how important context is and yet he doesn’t seem to consider the relationship with the second half of chapter 11 or chapter 10 and how this section may fit in here. To be clear head coverings and hair are NOT the point of this exchange to a church where Paul had gotten numerous reports of contentious behavior in this area and in the practice of the Lord’s Supper along with other areas as well. His job is to always bring us back to God’s design and in this case by taking us back to God’s creation design. Since Eve was not required to wear a head covering; who or what was her covering pre-fall and after the Fall? Adam! Who is our covering? Christ. Now as to women wearing them…it certainly isn’t a sin either way…to wear or not to wear. Conviction of conscience.  The sin happens when it becomes contentious in the church. For conviction not based in certainty will certainly lead to contention in the church.
77. **SCRIPTURE NIGHT LIGHTS,**by Philip Bennett Power (1822-1899) (digitally 2023 by Monergism, originally 1861). This volume began as small tracts sent to different parishioners on select words from Scripture that serve as night lights to the believer. But because of its popularity was place in book form and published for the edification of the saints. The author makes messages of 12 words such as “all”, “also”, “and’ and “how”…etc. he says when talking about the word “how” from II Peter,  ***“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.” 2 Peter ii, 9.****In this small word****“HOW,”****we have materials for making not merely a little night light, which shall glimmer through some few silent hours of spiritual darkness; but for making, if need be, a blazing lamp, which shall throw its brightness over many a mile of troubled waters, guiding the storm-tossed Christian, as he sails onward to the haven of his eternal rest. We must, however, resist the temptation of attempting to draw from this little word all its hidden stores; and just take from it as much, as our space will allow. This passage of Holy Scripture shews us the abundance of God’s resources—a most comforting thought for us, who are continually in need of help—and it tells us, that God knows how to use those resources which will deliver us from temptation.”*All of this is for our edification as the author points out and we must be able to look at our hearts very carefully before any of this can truly connect. He says, *“Our little night light must help us to see our own short comings, as well as God's resources; and thus it is doing us good service; for the less we lean on self, the more shall we lean on Him. It may be very pleasing to the natural man, and very flattering to his pride, to be told that he is a fine fellow! that self-dependence, and self-help, are manly and noble; and that it is a great thing not to be under an obligation to anyone; but all this is only a cunning trick of Satan's, to occupy our minds and keep them away from God—to keep us scraping the bare bones in our own lean hungry larder, when there is plenty for us in the rich store-houses of the Lord. Every man, whose eyes have been opened, sees something of the aggravated nature of his sin—the same evil has been done over and over again—the same sin has been committed, even against an increase of light and knowledge—and this makes a man miserable indeed.”*But the resources of God seen in each of these words continues to refresh, restore and renew the believer knowing our need for His grace and at the same time knowing that that grace is always available to us…His children. It is always amazing to me when I see the talent of these men who can mine such truth gems from so little. A book worth the time of any reader even…and maybe especially today.  (Free for download from Monergism.com)
78. **THE WELLS OF SALVATION OPENED; or, A Treatise Discovering the Nature, Preciousness, Usefulness of Gospel Promises, and Rules for the Right Appropriation of Them**, by William Spurstowe, D.D. (1655 digitally 2009 by Strait Gate Publications). This book came highly recommended…but it was so hard for me to read…or maybe I just wasn’t in the place to read it now. (I think it be the previous rather than the former.) I will look for a modernized version of this is the future and read it again because the premise is one that we all ought to consider from time to time. William Spurstowe (1605-1666) was an English, Calvinistic minister, theologian, and member of the Westminster Assembly. It is said by many to be one of the most valuable Puritan works ever written on any subject. It comprises the biblical teaching on the promises of God. It is, by far, the best treatment outside of Scripture on the subject. Spurstowe uses, as his main text, **2 Peter 1:3-4, *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to[c] his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”*** Every Christian is to stand firm on the promises that God has laid down in Scripture concerning His covenant and His Son Jesus Christ. It has been said by many through the ages that, there is a right use and a wrong use to these promises of scripture. One puritan author and pastor sais this of this book, “*Spurstowe, in a gentle and amiable style leads us through them all in order to enrich our faith in Christ, and cause us to esteem the value of Christ and His grace greater than anything else in the world.”*One quotes sees his heart, *““But the whole way of salvation from first to last, is all of mere grace that the promise might be sure (Romans 4: 16). Every link of the golden chain is made up of free mercy: election is free (Ephesians 1: 5); vocation free (2 Timothy 1: 9); justification free (Romans 5: 24); sanctification free (1 Corinthians 6: 11); glorification free (Romans 6: 23). And therefore though I can challenge nothing of the right, yet I may ask everything of mercy; especially being invited by Him, who feeds not His people with empty promises; but gives liberally unto everyone that asketh, and upbraids not either with former sins, or present failings (James 1: 5).”*But to me, so much of the language was so archaic that it was nigh impossible for me to get through it in this form…though because of its historical value and its being a jewel for God’s Church I will seek to find a modernized version and read it again…hopefully this year.

1. **KEEPING THE HEART: Lessons on Maintaining a Pure Heart in All Seasons of Life**by John Flavel (This book/treatise was first published in 1670…and this version by Aneko Press All rights reserved. Revisions copyright 2022.) This book was a treatise originally entitled **A Saint Indeed**or **The Great Work of a Christian in Keeping the Heart in the Several Conditions of Life**. He opens strong, which is his way. ***“Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4: 23).****The heart of man is his worst part before it is regenerated, and the best part afterward. It is the seat of principles, and the fountain of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian should be, principally fixed upon it. The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God. The greatest difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God. Here lies the very force and stress of religion; here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way, and the gate of heaven a narrow gate. Direction and help in this great work are the scope of the text wherein we have: An exhortation: Keep thy heart with all diligence. The reason or motive enforcing it: For out of it are the issues of life.”*Throughout this book, which is not as modernized as the last one that I read…but more modern than the Monergism digital copy, he keeps reminding us of the absolute need for us as believers to protect …keep… guard our hearts since our hearts, the world and Satan seek to lead us astray and all too often does. A fact that is continually supported in Scriptures and by all men of God through the ages. He says rather emphatically, *“I infer, for the awakening of everyone, that if the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, then there are only a few real Christians in the world. If everyone who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if everyone who has gifts and abilities, and who can preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian; in a word, if everyone who associates with the people of God and partakes of ordinances may pass for a Christian, then indeed the number is great! But alas! How few can be found, if you judge them by this rule: how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts, and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed, there are few closet-men among professing Christians. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these.”*Seeing the Church up close and personal, he then states, *“I infer, also, for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and effort regarding their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never likely to do God much service, or possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise when they live so carelessly? O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and invigorating their hearts! Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you do not nourish it with the fountain of life? If your body had been as starved as your soul has been, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more care of it.”*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 pastor’s heart and yet, it is not a long book, as his actual writing only covers 200 plus or minus pages. 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.”*This is the 3rd or 4th time I have read this book but this being a modern language version it was easier to understand because you didn’t have to work so hard to figure out the grammar and words. This should be a must read on the reading list of every Christian. The struggles of the Church have always been the same whether in Israel, England or America we struggling with Keeping our Hearts!
2. **A TREATISE OF LOVE*,***by John Rogers, ministers of God’s word in Dedham in Essex, (1572-1636. London: Printed by H. Lownes and R. Young, for N. Newbery, at the sign of the Starre in Popes head Alley, 1629. Copy write through Monergism © 2023) Interestingly enough his 3 main texts are**: *“God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”* 1 John 4:16. *“This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye love one another.”* 1 John 3:11. “*And this Commandment have we of him, that he that loveth God, should love his Brother also.”* 1 John 4:21.**These are greatand wonderful text but this is not an amiable pastoral text. While his subject is love he spends a lot of time focused on how we do not love well…or how we love like the pagans love…which isn’t real love after all. He is so forward because he KNOWS the urgency of getting this right. Once known for his vices and ungrateful acts, Rogers underwent a transformational journey marked by repentance and divine intervention that led him to emerge as a man of exemplary piety. There was such a change, by God’s grace, that he was known as an "illustrous ornament" to his college, Rogers' journey is often cited as an example of hope and transformation. Rogers fervently desires his teachings of love and unity to serve as the congregation's guiding light, allowing them to live in peace, and to grow in godly love and unity. His writings mirror his aspirations for a community that is bound by harmony, undeterred by evil, and dedicated to deeds of charity. He addresses his audience with a tone of fatherly but stern advice, exhorting them to resolve their differences amicably, to be charitable, and to set a shining example for other towns to follow. His hope is that God's honor is upheld through their actions and that they set a precedent for the future generations. He says, *“AMONG all the creatures God hath made (devils only excepted) man is the most apt and able to be his own tormentor; and of all the scourges with which he lasheth and afflicteth both his mind and body, none is found so cruel and intolerable as his own fears. The worse the times are like to be, the more need the mind hath of succour and encouragement, to confirm and fortify it for hard encounters; but from the worst prospect, fear inflicts the deepest and most dangerous wounds upon the mind of man, cutting the very nerves of its passive fortitude and bearing ability.”* The treatise is more than just a guidebook; it is a plea to the younger generation to uphold and exceed the standards set by their predecessors, using their experiences and the wisdom derived from them as guiding principles. *“And therefore, while a man is in prosperity and good case, to salute him, use him kindly, be glad of his company; and when the world frowns on him, and God casts him behind, then not to know him, to shake him off, go on the other side of the way, or if we must needs take notice of them, then to speak slightly to them, hoverly, and be strange and far off, this is no true love: and yet this is that that many a one finds in the world, as Pro. 14. 20. & 19. 4. 7. These be like winter-plashes, that be very broad when there is no need of them; but in summer are dry, when they should do most good.* *Put on brotherly affections, show them by brotherly actions, let not small matters make unkindness, depart from much for peace and love, let our differences be speedily compounded by others, if we cannot agree them within ourselves; fear rather to do the least wrong, than to suffer a greater: so shall we be fit to do good one to another upon all occasions; for goodness goes forward where love is, but contention or unkindness stops the course of all that is good. So shall we also be stronger against our common adversaries, the World, and Devil and Ourselves.”*Rogers concludes his message by commending his audience to the grace of God, emphasizing the continuity and endurance of love and faith beyond his physical existence.
3. **THE TWO TOWERS,**by J.R.R. Tolkien. (This edition 2004, 50th Anniversary edition pit into digital form 2012 or sometime after).  As I have said before, these are stimulating reads…some harder than others, which engage my mind much like the Bible does. There are only a couple of authorized versions with the many and various other versions losing much of the story along the way according to the introductions of the 50th Anniversary edition.  However, this edition, this fullness of the story, preserved and faithfully restored to the 1954 original by Christopher Tolkien, has been a delight to read once again…I have been able to see clearer the story and intent of its author seeking to remind people and cultures of things we have lost along the way…important things like basic loyalty and courage and fortitude and strength of character things that used to be highly prized in a civilized society. Tolkien obviously believed in the depravity of men, for the one ring of power to rule them all seems to be the overwhelming power of sin in the life of men…some can overcome it with the aid of a higher power of friendship and providence but most cannot. Those who can overcome are worthy men who are guided by a higher principle and they are to be followed and imitated. When one team member falls it is no reason for the mission/quest to fail because the completion of the task is what is good for everyone else even if it is not so good for the Ring bearer and his loyal Sam.  We saw this after Gandalf fell in the last book and as we see Sam doing at the end of this book in the bowels of Mordor. The way Tolkien describes the way where they walk is so consuming in that you feel like you are there and then there is the smells of Shelob’s lair and Mordor and the images of the place and once again you are there. One could get caught up in despair but along the way we see Sam cheering up Frodo along the way, at just the right time which iis what a friend does. I love this line*;  “‘Maybe,’ said Sam; ‘but where there’s life there’s hope, as my gaffer used to say; and need of vittles, as he mostways used to add. You have a bite, Mr. Frodo, and then a bit of sleep.’*Sam never forget where “they” came from, he holds the hope for both of them.  Everyone needs at least one friend like that…for many of us it is our wife given to us by God as our helpmate. A great read, now on to **The Return of the King.**
4. **COUNTERSTRIKE*:*The Fleet Ops Trilogy- Book 2,**by Scott Bartlett and Joshua James (2021). After barely surviving the new enemies onslaught, Captain Husher, his crew and the small force under Admiral Ivers, are having to re-group for a counterstrike if it is even possible…but it is their only chance at survival. Defeat is an option but one they are not willing to live with at this point.  There has to be a way. Husher will call on all of his vast experience to make it so.  An old enemy has raised his extremely ugly head again and may be drawing them into a trap…but Husher is aware.  The *UHF Relentless*has been the ship of the hour…will it continue to be? Can they get out and get home?  I guess that is left for the last book in this trilogy, **Relentless.**
5. **FORGOTTEN EMPIRE (Space Raiders Book 2**, by Ken Lozito (2023). Nathan is on the adventure of a life time. After being abducted with a few others from earth during a raid to secure a particular alien disguised as a human Nathan and his friends would up in a conspiracy that they helped solve gaining them the opportunity to stay in space and captain the newly christen *Spacehog*…the ship previously own by Kaz one of his abductors. Now they are seeking to make ends meet in space as Nathan stumbles upon a mystery that dates back before the founding of this galaxy maybe even at the birth of the universe. But how is that possible? He and his crew spend the rest of this story seeking a way to solve this mystery.  A mystery and search that has caused countless lives and will take others but Nathan and the *Spacehog*settle this matter once and for all…if possible. Nathan has an in that no other others ever have an alien devise has incorporated itself with in his arm that enables him to open “doors” no one else can and with the help of “Larry” a creature of uncertain origin this romp of an adventure is from start to finish exciting and fun. I am a Ken Lozito fan and hope to read the rest of his books…wait, II have…One more to go for now… **DARK MENACE(Space raiders Book 3)** as they go in search of a couple of their missing crew and solve another mystery along the way.
6. **AGAINST ALL ODDS: A True Story of Ultimate Courage and Survival in World War II,** by Alex Kershaw (2022).  Alex Kershaw has written another epic to be sure This book highlights a few of the courageous men who fought and died in World War II specifically those who fought with the 3rd Division, the Marne men,  beginning in North Africa and moving slowly through Sicily, Italy, France and eventually to Germany. The book revolves around 4 of the most decorated soldiers of the war…all Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. We look briefly at Gen. Patton, a longer gaze at Major Gen. Lucian Truscott, men who were essential in the winning of the war. But they are not the main focus though much is told about them. So we look at the men whom this book is mostly about, like Maurice “Footsie” Britt, who would for a while held the honor of winning every medal that could be given out in the war. We meet him in North Africa along with another man who would eventually beat Britt out for the most medals of any war…Audie Murphy. Britt was a NFL Football star and Murphy was from the hardscrabble of East Texas and lived that way. Murphy once told his men about medals, *“Bravery is determination to do a job that you know has to be done. And if you throw in discomforts and lack of sleep and anger, it’s easier to be brave. Coldness and wetness and disgust have gotten medals for lots of soldiers.”*When asked about his receiving the CMH specifically he said this, *“After the ceremony, a reporter asked Murphy what had made him courageous. ‘Wanting to go back to Texas,’ said Murphy, ‘lack of sleep, anger, disgust, discomfort and hate—those things won me my medals, and they’ve won many other medals for many other guys.’”*Murphy’s fate was forever sealed. He would carry the burden of officially being World War II’s gutsiest American—the most decorated of the sixteen million who had worn a uniform during the greatest conflict of modern times. He had in fact become the most decorated American soldier in history. Another hero that we are introduced to (many of us have known this name if we have read WWII history before) Captain Keith Ware (3rd Army, 15th Regiment, same as Murphy’s) who had gotten his commission the hard way…he didn’t go to West Point he started out as a grunt…having been drafted. Aside from the CMH he also became the first and only draftee in history to attain the rank of general before serving and dying in Vietnam. He as well, would win the CMH along with many other medals. The last main character is Michael Daley, a West Point drop out with a score to settle…literally…and he would risk his life over and over again to keep his men alive. There stories are among the best ever told from personal interviews and journals I have read. But the war was not the end of the story. The author talks about how heavy it was to wear this acclaim after the guns had silenced.  Having survived against all odds, who among them would finally find peace. This part of the story is worth the price of the book.
7. **TO HELL AND BACK,**by Audie Murphy (originally published in1949. This copy was published in 2002 with forward by Tom Brokaw). This is the classic bestselling memoir that actually set the stage for so many others that would come through the decades to recount the soldiers own personal story of life and death and survival through the worst of experiences. Audie spends writing as if this was his personal log and diary. Narrative and first person account moves this story forward from North Africa to home in the states after the war. Literally he went to Hell and Back and his experiences relay that in such a way that this book is difficult to put down. Having seen the movie many times I had never actually read his book so vacation was that time. He had a hard time even getting into action because of his size and his extremely young look. The Marines wouldn’t take him…didn’t think he was serious. The Paratroopers wouldn’t take him but the Infantry was taking everybody making them into the next member of the *“Brotherhood of International Killers”*as a good friend of Murphy’s once described the infantry after you have killed your first man..  Even though he was a crack shot everyone saw him as a liability even his close friend Lt. then Captain Keith Ware, but his potential for getting the most difficult jobs done and protecting his men became evident fairly quickly...though he and Ware would be the only 2 left from the original unit that started in North Africa by the time war was over. Not all had been killed but many of them were. Murphy would end up winning every medal the militaries of the day could give out (some multiples, making him the status of the most decorated soldier in the history of the US military)…all of this before he turned 21. But with all of that acclaim that could have been written about he actually spends the book talking about the guys from his 15th regiment B Company would didn’t win the acclaim. He focuses on the guy who didn’t come home or went home with a “million dollar” would many of which would saddle them to a wheel chair until far later in their lives. He was asked about fear and the soldier once and he said. *“Fear was always moving up with us. It always was. In the heat of the battle it may go away. Sometimes it vanishes in a blind, red rage that comes when you see a friend fall. Then again you get so tired that you become indifferent. But when you are moving into combat, why try to fool yourself. Fear is right there beside you.”*After the war Murphy had what would later be classified as an acute case of PTSD and he lived daily with the memories of those men he couldn’t save…but he didn’t regret his service. In his quiet moments he would wonder, *“Have the years of blood and ruin stripped me of all decency? Of all belief? Not of all belief. I believe in the force of a hand grenade, the power of artillery, the accuracy of a Garand. I believe in hitting before you get hit, and that dead men do not look noble. But I also believe in men like Brandon and Novak and Swope and Kerrigan; and all the men who stood up against the enemy, taking their beatings without whimper and their triumphs without boasting. The men who went and would go again to hell and back to preserve what our country thinks right and decent. My country, America! That is it. We have been so intent on death that we have forgotten life. And now suddenly life faces us. I swear to myself that I will measure up to it. I may be branded by war, but I will not be defeated by it.”*Like so many other war fighters it was hard to find his way back to peace.  It is as if some are bread to be war fighters and when they are not fighting they question their purpose…Murphy was one of those and he died in his prime in 1971 when his small plane crash. But what a hero.  Where are the heroes today?  They are all around us… let us make sure we honor their sacrifice.
8. **HELMET FOR MY PILLOW: From Parris island to the Pacific- a Young marine’s stirring account of combat in WWII,**BY Robert Leckie (first published in 1957 this copy with the extra material on the battle of Tenaru was published in 2001). This book along with **With the Old Breed**, by E.B. Sledge would become the basis for the HBO miniseries *The Pacific*. I have not read a more descriptive account of the war in the pacific since reading Sledge’s book, **With the Old Breed**. These two books along with another book entitled **Flyboys**, by James Bradley ought to be read by all WWII enthusiasts or even novices. This is one of 2 firsthand accounts that will leave the reader feeling some of the trauma. Like so many, Leckie enlisted right after Pearl Harbor attack and joined the Marines and was sent to Pariss Island, South Carolina for preparation for the Pacific. The Marines are a “special” bunch to be sure. He recounts, *“This is how the Marines train their men. Keep them mean and nasty, like starving beasts, says the Corps, and they will fight better. When men are being moved from one place to another, spare no effort to make it painful; and before they have arrived at their destination, dispatch a man ahead to survey the ground with an eye toward discomfort. For substance give them cold food, and for tools a machete, and if the* *Commander has any influence with the gods of the clouds, he must see to it that it rains.”* He was part of the reconstituted 1st Marine Division who would see some of the worst fighting and suffer the worst losses of any Marine Division in Guadalcanal, New Britain, New Caledonia and Peleliu along with the battle of Tenaru. Very few details of the horror are spared but also he shows vividly the sacrifices made letting his readers know how warriors are made, how they fight and die in the defense of their country. Like Sledge, Leckie talks about the measure of victory which is often measured inch by bloody inch rather than in miles. And the picture is vivid leaving no one untouched by such firsthand realities. This is another book that I have put off years reading and finally received it as a gift and was looking forward to reading. It did not disappoint!
9. **THE RETURN OF THE KING,**by J.R.R. Tolkien (2004 anniversary issue complete with annotations and appendix with extra information along with the genealogies of the different “species” found in Middle-earth). This is my every 2 year reading of this classic work. This is a classic that I will come back to over and over agaqin for the tale is wonderful but the lessons are timeless…especially from the perspective of the Christian. My take away last time from this book while reading in the light of Covid 19, racial unrest and the desire to rebuild our economy after Covid, is that these are cycles of life that men seem to be always going through is no different than 2 years ago or 100 years ago or 2000 years ago…the age of men is wrought with controversy and it is blessed with wonder.  Along the way, God raises up men and women to “rally” the troops…whether that be for the Reformation of the Church or the restoration of an economy.  But through it all there are always tensions with people that ebb and flow through this constant cycle of life at least here among the men of the West but among all men in general. Even after Sauron is finally defeated there is still tension among men, and then as well between the manifestations of evil that still remain…orcs, goblins, and trolls. *“‘Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary. Yet it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule.”* In these last days of men as we await our King of kings…evil still exists…and always will until our King finally comes and vanquishes it forever and ever. No matter what successes a society have they are always at the mercy of their weakest and vilest selves and yet there are times of joy and celebration for not all is lost…even when things are at times the darkest. This has been the story of men throughout time…even the story of God’s children.  This is the way that God planned it and this is the way that Tolkien planned his Middle-Earth world. Speaking of Sam the most innocent of Hobbits,  *“Already the Ring tempted him, gnawing at his will and reason. Wild fantasies arose in his mind; and he saw Samwise the Strong, Hero of the Age, striding with a flaming sword across the darkened land, and armies flocking to his call as he marched to the overthrow of Barad-dûr. And then all the clouds rolled away, and the white sun shone, and at his command the vale of Gorgoroth became a garden of flowers and trees and brought forth fruit. He had only to put on the Ring and claim it for his own, and all this could be. In that hour of trial it was the love of his master that helped most to hold him firm; but also deep down in him lived still unconquered his plain hobbit-sense: he knew in the core of his heart that he was not large enough to bear such a burden, even if such visions were not a mere cheat to betray him.”*Also, as I was once again reading this amazing tale,I was impressed with the vivid word pictures that he paints as he describes the forest lands of Ithilien, the city of Minas Tirith as well as the ugliness of the towers of Mordor, the orcs and their spawn. But as I said, through it all, through this entire tale there is hope best expressed by this statement that has warmed the hearts of so many readers, *“There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach.”*That light is always there for God’s children to give hope for today and a hope for a better tomorrow when our King of kings returns. Rest will come in that light…*“But the Queen Arwen said: ‘A gift I will give you. For I am the daughter of Elrond. I shall not go with him now when he departs to the Havens; for mine is the choice of Lúthien, and as she so have I chosen, both the sweet and the bitter. But in my stead you shall go, Ring-bearer, when the time comes, and if you then desire it. If your hurts grieve you still and the memory of your burden is heavy, then you may pass into the West, until all your wounds and weariness are healed. But wear this now in memory of Elfstone and Evenstar with whom your life has been woven!’ And she took a white gem like a star that lay upon her breast hanging upon a silver chain, and she set the chain about Frodo’s neck. ‘When the memory of the fear and the darkness troubles you,’ she said, ‘this will bring you aid.’”* The same promised rest is given to all of His Children who conquer by His grace! As wonder full as these books are…the appendix offers so much insight that it is well worth the read as well.
10. **GUARDING THE HEART,**by A.W. Pink (1930’s digitally reproduced with study questions added by Chapel Library 2006) This book is a must for all believers (especially the study questions at the end)…in fact, I think I am going to re-read on a regular basis  because the truths that are found here in cannot be incorporated with one reading.  This is an exposition of **Proverbs 4:23- *“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”***This is His take on the subject so masterfully dealt with in John Flavel’s book;**KEEPING THE HEART: Lessons on Maintaining a Pure Heart in All Seasons of Life**. In fact, he quotes from this book often but has his own exposition as well. However, don’t think that this is the only text…this book is filled with Scripture supporting literally everything he says. Pink through this exposition seeks to answer the questions that every Christian asks. We know we need to do this, but how? There are a number of quotes/prayers I could use but this one captures the heart that Pink is seeking to reach in this book. *“Oh Lord, thou requires me to keep my heart with all diligence, and I feel utterly incompetent for such a task: such a work lies altogether beyond my feeble powers; therefore, I humbly ask Thee in the name of Christ to graciously grant unto me supernatural strength to do as Thou hast bidden me, Lord, work in me both to will and to do Thy good pleasure.”*There is so much worthy of the reader, see here is a quote to show just how practical this text is, “*A very large and important part of heart work lies in observing its first motions, and checking sin there. The motions of sin are weakest at the first, and a little watchfulness and care then, prevents much trouble and mischief later. But if the first movings of sin in the imagination be not observed and resisted, then the careless heart is quickly brought under the full power of temptation, and Satan is victorious”.* And then yet one more, *“Ah, beloved, it will wonderfully calm thy troubled breast and sustain thy fainting heart to rest upon that blessed fact. The poor worldling may say, “the bottom has dropped out of everything,” but not so the saint, for the eternal God is his refuge, and underneath him are still the “everlasting arms.” Then, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (Joh 14:27). The very afflictions which are so painful unto flesh and blood are designed for our spiritual blessing: God chastens for “our profit” (Heb 12:10).*This particular digital version is available for free through Monergism or Chapel Library web sites and is roughly 106 pages depending upon your formatting. Don’t forget about the study notes …god for individual study as well as a group study. These were added by Chapel Library, they are not original to the work. It was expected that people would ask the question that was on their heart.
11. **RELENTLESS: The Fleet Ops Trilogy- Book 2,**by Scott Bartlett and Joshua James (2021). The *UHF Relentless* is no more… blown apart with much of her crew by Husher 2.0, alias Woe, the remake by the Brood of the alternate universe Husher.  If it is possible he/it is even more evil than the old Husher wishing for the complete destruction of all humans. Vin Husher almost died in the destruction of the relentless but he has survived…so far to recover and fight another day. The crew has been integrated with the crew of the “new” supercarrier designated *UHF Providence* after its namesake Captained by Captain Keyes, Husher’s mentor and friend in the old Galactic War days and the beginning of the Progenitor Wars. This book is a worthy conclusion to this series…full of drama, intrigue and battles that keep you riveted to your seat in a desire to know…who will win…who will overcome…will the Brood succeed…will Husher die…and what about Fesky…and how do Jake and his Mech’s weigh in here concerning the future of humanity if the AI generated Brood get out of this pocket universe. Things are so different in this universe. The rules of war have changed.  Will the discovery of the Yin homeworld help or hinder the conclusion of this war with the Brood. All this and more is brought to a crescendo in this book.  I can only hope that there will be more from these characters by Scott and Joshua…though this is a fitting ending to be sure…but then there is the plaguing question, What to do about the other AI’s that are still out there?
12. **A PRACTICAL TREATISE OF FEAR,**by John Flavel (1st published in 1684…Monergism digital Copyright © 2018).  You knew this was just the shortened version of the title of the treatise.  The full treatise title is: **A Practical Treatise of Fear: Triumphing Over Sinful Fear, Wherein the various kinds, uses, causes, effects and remedies therof are distinctly opened and prescribed, for the relief and encouragement of all those that fear God in these doubtful and distracting times.**To some degree, everyone experiences fear. It impacts the decisions we make and leaves us feeling helpless. John Flavel begins this book by examining various fears and discussing general ways God governs it in this world. He then turns to sinful fear in particular, explaining its causes and disastrous effects. His longest chapter discusses rules for dealing with sinful fear, showing how a proper fear of God is the ultimate remedy for all other fears. He seeks to speak to certain objections, *“Oh! but what if my trial should be long, and the siege of temptations tedious? Answer: Cannot you distrust your own strength and ability, but you must also limit God's? What if you have but a small stock of patience? Cannot the Lord strengthen you with all might in the inner-man, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, according to his glorious power, Col. 1:11. And is it not his promise to confirm you to the end? 1 Cor. 1:8.”* This practical book will help you avoid making excuses for sinful fear and encourage you to trust in Christ’s commitment to settle His people’s feeble and trembling hearts. He takes as his beginning text **Isaiah 8:12-14a- *“Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him* *be your fear, and let Him be your dread.  And He will become a sanctuary.”*** And then builds on **Isaiah 35:4- *“Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.’”,***along with countless other texts.  When we recognize all of our slavish fears…we are better able to recognize and exalt the fear of the Lord which is *“a careful endeavor to please God and a careful avoiding of things that offend the majesty of God.”* Or if you want a longer definition because this one is too simple; *“The Fear of the Lord is a gracious habit or principle planted by God in the soul of His own, whereby the soul is kept under a holy awe of the eye of God, and from thence is inclined to perform and do what pleases Him, and to shun and avoid whatever He forbids and hates.”*He seeks to wrap it up with these words, *“You (Believers) are to exalt the fear of God in your hearts, and let it gain the ascendant over all your other fears. This is the prescription in my text for the cure of all our slavish fears, and indeed all the forementioned rules for the cure of sinful fears run into this, and are reducible to it.”* Another book that would be helpful to have modernized by at list “pointing it differently and updating the language a bit…but overall excellent work of a well honored Puritan pastor and writer.
13. **RUTH: A Story of God's Redeeming Love**, by Timothy Mulder, Michelle Mulder (2023). This is an excellent resource on God’s grace (*hesed)* to Ruth, Naomi and Boaz and literally every believer as we see how God delights in working with His children. Most studies focus on Ruth, which is not wrong, but our authors do so much to should us the grace God showers upon the “prodigal” Naomi and her transformation from Mara…to a renewed Naomi. *“Naomi did not trust God’s hand of providence in her life or she would not have tried to send Orpah and Ruth away. By urging her daughters-in-law to return to Moab not once or twice, but three times, Naomi showed her disbelief that God would provide for them. Naomi had reached the point where she was entirely and utterly without hope. However, God remained faithful to her.”*The study questions get us thinking about the text but I often wonder if these questions help us to internalize the wonderful truths of the book that the Mulder’s so well make clear. (This is an issue I have with many study guides…do they help us in our meditation of the biblical resource to enable us to keep our hearts so we can fear the Lord or is it just compiling intellectual capitol.)  I love his threading God’s grace throughout this Bible study.  It is not that others have not emphasized this but it is written as one who has experienced God’s amazing grace first hand through the difficulties of life. He says, *“The Hebrew root word for kindness is hesed. Hesed is one of the key theological concepts in the book of Ruth. This exact word appears in Ruth 2: 20 and 3: 10. Hesed is not translated by any one English term or phrase. It is a characteristic of God which describes his interactions with his people. Hesed conveys the sense of love, faithfulness, kindness, goodness, deep loyalty, mercy, and compassion shown by God. It is a model of how we are to treat others. At its heart, hesed is an action. Frequently, hesed is translated as ‘loving-kindness’ or ‘steadfast love,’ and is involved in saving someone in real and desperate need… Hesed, in the book of Ruth, is shown in the relationship between God and man and the relationship between man and fellow man. As such, when Naomi tells her daughters-in-law that they have dealt kindly with her, she tells them that they have modeled God’s hesed toward her. Those who have experienced God’s loving kindness should share the same loving kindness with others. In her refusal to leave Naomi, Ruth displayed God’s hesed toward Naomi when Naomi was at the lowest, most hopeless point in her life.”*This is a Bible Study that all churches should read as they study God’s *hesed* through the centuries.
14. **RESOLVE (The Lost Warship Book 5),**by Daniel Gibbs (2023). This story is heating up to be sure in more ways than one.  They are building an armada and an army to combat the nanite entity bent on destroying everything and everyone in Sextan B. Multiple warships are in process of completion though they must go into uncharted space to get their precious lithium in quantities enough to complete the projects at hand.  Struggling with his conscience…call it PTSD…or a commanders struggle with so many being asked to sacrifice their lives David finds himself on the edge very often these days. BUUTT… General David Cohen is in love…and now engaged.  (Didn’t see that one coming? Or did you?) Not knowing if they will ever return home does strange things to a person…to the crew at large. Then on top of that amazing turn of events they just “happen” upon Asperion an android that dates way beyond human comprehension. All through these books God’s sovereignty, whether the triune God of Christianity or Hashem of Judaism or Allah of Islam or the Zeivlot Maker or even Asperions creators Creator, has been apparent. **Spoiler alert long quote between Asperion and a Christian chaplain:** *“My creators believed in a higher power. They felt the universe was the construct of an intelligent being that enjoyed the beauty of making something where nothing existed before. That is why they made me, because they wanted to continue the tradition. They felt it would honor the supreme being.’ ‘Some humans think the same way. I have noticed from your histories.’ Asperion’s eyes went to the cross at the front of the chapel. ‘What must one do to be saved, in your faith?’ ‘Pray the sinner’s prayer.’ ‘It’s that easy?’ It didn’t make sense to him, though he’d read it in the library documents. ‘I wouldn’t call it easy, Asperion. I would say the first step is simple, but that each day we must strive to, as much as possible, emulate Christ. That isn’t easy.’ ‘But you say this man was perfect. How can we possibly be the same?’ ‘We can’t. None of us can, not even an android with more brainpower than fifty humans will ever have. That’s the faith aspect… Every day we sin. The rub is trying to avoid doing wrong, as much as we can, and to, instead, do what’s right, even… no, especially, when its hard and against our personal interests.’ ‘And you think this would be available to me?’ Estrada pursed her lips. ‘Like I said, that’s above my pay grade, Asperion. But God sees our hearts. I fail to believe He doesn’t have room for you, regardless of the particulars of how you came to exist.’ He kept silent, processing her statements through his neural matrix.”* (A bit to all-inclusive for me, but the man writes a good, clear and moralistic story.)The “good” doctor Hayworth is still holding onto his atheism for the moment but even he is beginning to fudge on the coincidences being too easy unless there is someone engineering all of this in the background though he remains publically stalwart. The android brings new possibilities.  Will they be able to unlock the mysteries of the obelisk and get home? Will they be able to come up with a weapon that will allow them to leave once this menace is dealt a death blow? Oh, as a taste, what did they find back home in the Milky Way that may help get them home, that is, if they eradicate the nanite scourge?  One book with the appropriate title **FAITH**to answer these and all other questions.
15. **SPACE RAIDERS: DARK MENACE (3rd book in Space Raiders series)**, by Ken Lozito (2023).  The fun never stops with this one. Nate is “infected” by the Asherah entity…the long lost race that home world was discovered in the last book. He now has the ability to look at situations from multiple directions and from multiple planes of reality…and a sort of information gathering “Collective” has come along for the ride to keep tabs on the humans use of their technology…so not entirely “lost”…it is the more screwy part of this story to be sure but also entertaining…whether it is an AI that can span galaxies or is actually connected to the tech that is within Nate only time will tell but as we will see they are not completely adverse to talking though difficult issues and coming to a compromise. Interested yet? Anyway, there is this “influence” then there is mercenaries trying to rule the universe and seeking to kill Nate…again. These mercs are using a global slave trade to fund their purchases.  They are scooping up unaware species, (called juvenile worlds because they lack spacefaring technology), that don’t even know there are people/aliens “up there”! They are also on the hunt for Raylin and Serena that have not checked in for months after they left on an unknown quest (from the last book).  Everyone is on deck for the search which is woven into the mercenaries work and the discovery of all the codes the mercs need to succeed …and guess who has them and why they are trying to kill him. This is a real slam dunk…shoot ‘em up with an explosive ending to what may be the end of a series…which is too bad from m this readers perspective. I wasn’t sure I would like this when I first began to read…but then it is Ken Lozito…I should have known.
16. **IMPOSSIBLE CHRISTIANITY: Why Following Jesus Does Not Mean You Have to Change the World, Be an Expert in Everything, Accept Spiritual Failure, and Feel Miserable Pretty Much All the Time ,**by Kevin DeYoung (Copyright © 2023). Are you tired, overwhelmed, worn out in pursuing godliness? Is it possible that we have the wrong paradigm in our head as to what a real true blue Christian is all about? Kevin thinks so and He writes this book because, *“Many Christians have come to expect (and accept) that being a disciple of Jesus is a lot like my thirty-five-year journey with running. You read the books. You watch the videos. You get the right equipment. You try to be disciplined. You try to improve. But with only the mildest of success. Maybe you have been following Jesus for many years, maybe since you were a little kid. Sometimes you feel like a winner, but mostly you feel like you are an average to below-average believer. You aren’t ready to quit being a Christian. You know that being a Christian is important. In fact, it’s the most important thing in your life. You like being a Christian and are willing to work hard at it. The only trouble is, Christianity seems impossible. I should hasten to add an important clarification, lest you misunderstand what this book is about. You may think, “Ah, so this is another book about how justification is by faith alone, another book about how the gospel is good news for exhausted people, another book about how God loves us even though we are spiritual failures. Not exactly. This book is about the last line of that sentence above, the line about “how God loves us even though we are spiritual failures.” This book is about how that line, however well intentioned, is unbiblical, inaccurate, and unhelpful. But reveling in God’s grace does not mean we should revel in being spiritual failures. He does not mean for us to feel bad all the time. He does not mean for us to be lackluster disciples. He does not mean for us to be constantly overwhelmed. He does not mean for us to feel guilty all the time. God does not mean for Christianity to be impossible.”*  Usually I have a lot to say but when the author says it better…why not let him This next quote I found to be especially helpful. *“To those who ask, “How do I know if I am loving enough?” let me give you three words: trajectory, community, and apology. Trajectory. Don’t measure how you’re doing today compared to two days ago but look over months and years. Is there growth in godliness? Is there love for the things of God? Look for a long-term pattern. And remember, this trajectory is not how you get saved, but one indication that you are saved. Community. Assurance is a community project. The closer you get to a holy God, the more you see your own sin. We need other people to point out fruit in our lives. We need the church to discern that we are genuine members of the body of Christ. Don’t spend all your time peeling back the onion layers of your soul. Entrust yourself to godly elders and good spiritual friends. Apology. Cultivate a life of repentance. One of the signs that you are walking in the light is that you are honest about having walked in the darkness. This doesn’t mean you do not sin anymore or that you still do not have some dark times. It means that you bring your sin into the light and are honest about it, turn from it, and run to Christ.”*It starts out a bit slow but by the time you get to chapter 5 it picks up to a point where you can’t put it down. On every page there is NOT anything new…but the way he says it causes you to pause and then want to push on for more. Good stuff especially in chapters 5-8.
17. **GRIMM DECISION: Grimm’s War Book 6 of 7 (so far),**by Jeffery Haskell (2023). The war with the Caliphate is back on…or continuing however you want to look at it. Commander Grimm still hasn’t proved himself to the hard cases in the space Navy, he is still being blamed for something he didn’t do.  Politics…but he hasn’t been drummed out of the service yet much to his crews delight. He does have many victories and discoveries that have led to knowing what is going on but he is still not being used to his full potential. He has been training chips captains in the art of war as he has command of a Destroyer Squadron. His and his ship, *Interceptor*are given new orders …away from the fighting, of course…they are going on a diplomatic mission to a planet at the edge of alliance space that is not in the Alliance Cordova with 2000 marines and the new Ambassador and his wife. They are to go and participate in war games with the backwater planet…hence, more politics, and then some. A coup is brewing in the background and underbelly of this planet one that may bring in another enemy of the Alliance that has not been heard much from since an encounter a few years ago…the Guild. Well, it wasn’t the war he had planned for but it is war none the less…or almost. With betrayal flying from the most unexpected places and loyalties being shown from others the players get complicated...but that only adds to the story which may be one of the best in this series of stories yet. Once again Commander Jacob T. Grimm is being called on to decide who lives and who dies…all of it stretching his faith along the way.  This is a robust engaging story that leaves you on your seat until the end…but is it the end…on to book 7, **TRADITIONS OF COURAGE**due out sometime in 2024.
18. **FAITH (The Lost Warship Book 6),**by Daniel Gibbs (2023). Wow…what an excruciating ending. But I get ahead of myself. So much has been going on to prepare for the coming nanites. Digging at the precursor obelisk and then there is a major change occurring in David’s life that he never thought would occur while he was on active duty. He and Bohai marry and before long they begin a family, much to their surprise.  So much good is occurring with peoples coming together in alliances that everyone is waiting for the next shoe to drop. They even have the weapon needed to defeat the nanites but do they have enough ships? The cold hard fact is that they do not. But even without that, David is in it to the end to protect those who cannot protect themselves. The *Lion of Judah* and her crew will be in the fight of their lives. In the meantime a major find at the obelisk has just occurred…and then another major find in the Milky Way galaxy as well. The desire is still to go home but they must defend the Zeivlots and Zavlots. Dr. Hayworth efforts pay off and a stable wormhole is established between the Milky Way and Sextan B. Contact is made and Justin Spencer, who is still the president of the Terran Coalition, is aware of what David is up against but politics get in the way.  The Milky Way alliance SATO could send the number of ships necessary to win this battle…but the politics. Oh, the politics. But there is more involved here than what politics can mess up. A need to eradicate an evil that consumes. David’s choices are limited but he knows he cannot leave Sextan B to the nanites who only consume so what will be the outcome for this blockbuster soon to be bestseller? The reader knows how it would come out…with Water’s (think theophany) intervention but watching it unfold was spellbindingly good. Blowing things up and getting right to the edge of obliteration and realizing the help that is needed beyond ourselves and then that help coming just as He has promised. I will miss these characters to be sure.
19. **THE COVENANT HOUSEHOLD-**by Doug Wilson (2022). I just finished this book (free on Kindle Unlimited). I am not a fan of Doug Wilson and overall I do not recommend his books because of his heavy handed approach, his volatility and his continual attempts in the past to be polarizing within the Reformed community. Now, I don’t know Doug personally, but have for the last 3-4 decades read many of His works seeking to determine if what has been said about him is true on his stand with the Federal Vision (which he has sort of denounced as of 2017, but if it quacks like a duck, it …) and the Patriarchy movement that has perhaps done more to weaken marriage in the past than it has helped. Now to be fair it is often his “disciples” who have taken it too far…men who have sought to reclaim their “covenant rights” without realizing that their main covenant right is to consider others first. Doug’s, fault, like a couple of cohorts of his and past friends of mine, Phil Lancaster and Jeffery Myers, is that they like to smack the bull…or stoke the fire to stir up controversy…and the Bible is very clear about this sin. But even with so much baggage from my generation I decided once again to pick up this little book.  It is short and I think (still deciding) I could give this to a young man seeking to be a husband (as long as I or an elder studied it with him)…or a new husband with his bride right there beside him along with a mature Christian man or woman…or even to an older husband that has never known about God’s covenantal formula for marriage…I think, as long as a mature Christian was with him. (Do you see the caveat for each? Because without guidance men have taken what he says and misapplied it.) However, He uses the word “responsibility a lot, *“But the first and most fundamental sin that a man commits is forgetting that he is responsible for all of them. If we are talking about Bob and Suzie Smith, Bob is responsible for Bob’s sins, Suzy is responsible for Suzy’s sins, and Bob is responsible for all the Smiths’ sins. The man is the head, whether he wants to be or not, and the only choice is whether he will be a good head or a bad head.”*Now, to be fair, this is not wrong…just not clear in my opinion. This being written by one to whom words are very important…so I would think He would have used use another word. The man; the covenant head of his family, is ***“accountable”***to God for all that happens in the family. This, I believe, is what he is saying…but accountable goes beyond responsible which should scare the heeby-jeebies out of every man who seeks to follow God’s Word covenantally. His 7 sins of the husband are spot on (especially the section titled *Excuses, Excuses, Excuses*…there also needs to be a section on keeping secrets) and his 7 sins of the wife is as well technically correct…but…it is said in a way that most people, men and women, will take offense to, biblically speaking. Since this book is short I could find a use for this book being used together with a pastor or an elder in counseling even though he makes the point that the Christian husband doesn’t need to talk to anyone about problems in your marriage and then out the other side of his mouth when the couple goes to counseling he tells the husband that the problems in the marriage are 100% the husbands fault. As the covenant head he is 100% accountable to be sure and even I will tell the man I will be harder on him but let’s not lose sight of the grace...which for the last 3-4 decades he has.
20. **ADMIRAL HUSHER: Fleet Ops Novelette,**by Scott Bartlett (2023). This gives a glimpse in the life of Captain (Admiral) Husher’s life after returning from the pocket universe and the near destruction of His ship and crew by the Brood. As inferred a sentence up …Captain Husher is finally honored for nearly 3 decades and 3 or was it 4 wars of service with the rank of Admiral.  And almost immediately after having been given that rank a conflict breaks out between the Quatro and the Gok that the Admiralty of the United Human Fleet believes it is everyone’s best interest to intercede in before it spreads to the whole galaxy and of course Husher …the newly minted Admiral with the most experience is volunteered to head up the fleet to go and investigate. But, of course, what started out as a diplomatic mission soon accelerates because of the arrogance of the Quatro to a shooting match with Husher forces winning the day…twice…in two separate engagements which basically decimated the forces of the Quatro reducing their ability to wage war to almost nil. Using what was learned to combat the Brood Husher teaches the galaxy that there is a new sheriff in town…for now.  A great “ending” to this series.
21. **THE FADING OF THE FLESH,**by George Swinnock, Copyright © 2019 by Monergism. This book hasn’t been updated as far as I can tell and while it is has Swinnock’ s flair for simplicity and illustration making it fun to read…it has its moments even for a seasoned reader of the Puritans like me. (maybe, I am getting lazy.) Anyway. This is yet another book written on a subject that we don’t often talk about today except at a funeral…death. The Puritans talked a lot about it because death was their reality.  Death was all around them so it was a topic of discussion…concerning the reason for the fear of death and the gospel’s (taken from the Psalms) answer for the Christian. He develops this whole work around **Psalm 73:26- *“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever*.”**…focusing specifically on God as the Christian’s portion come what may. One of the best chapters is when Swinnock breaks out into doxology in chapter 19…for it is the crescendo of all that he has been saying wand he himself gets overwhelmed with the truth …sort of like Paul would get when he would breakout into doxology in the midst of a doctrinal teaching. We see His heart which isn’t very theological by today’s standards…but it is definitely pastoral…which many of the Puritans were…despite much criticism to the opposite. Ths was meant as a pastoral sermon at a funeral and develop into this small treatise that is definitely a gem for the church.
22. **THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU: The Promise of the Gospel in the Aaronic Blessing**by Michael Glodo 2023. This book came from a series of speaking engagements and articles entitled *We Still Have Faces* talking about how **Numbers 6:22-27**ought to shape the way we love the LORD and one another. As I said his main text is **Numbers 6:22-27-*“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”***Michael takes a very very old blessing that was to be placed upon God’s people and has been placed upon God’s people for centuries since Christ’s ascension and helps us to understand how in many ways it is the heartbeat of the Gospel of the Old and New Testaments even though Christ fulfills this benediction by His coming and will completely fulfill it at His return. *“We are meant to recount the ways in which the substance of Christ was anticipated in the Old Testament (such as in the Aaronic blessing) and appeared in the New Testament. In Christ we are blessed and kept, God’s face shines upon us, and he lifts up his countenance upon us. In Christian baptism, God’s name has been placed upon us. We are meant to contemplate how God in Christ has done and is doing these things. For example, stop to consider the ways God “keeps” us in Christ. Because he is our Good Shepherd, Christ has promised that no one will snatch us from his hand (John 10: 12, 28–29). On the cross he cast out the ruler of this world (John 12: 31). In union with Christ by faith we have been “delivered . . . from the domain of darkness and transferred . . . to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col. 1: 13). Therefore, nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8: 39). Similarly, by faith in Christ, God’s name has been placed upon us (Rev. 3: 12). Christ has given us peace (John 14: 27). Everything that was pronounced to Israel in the Aaronic blessing has been secured, is being given, and will be ours in fullness in what Christ has done, is doing by his Spirit, and will do at the consummation of the ages. Therefore, we receive the blessings of the Aaronic blessing by faith in contemplation of the person and work of Jesus Christ.”*However, even though it is said at the end of many services…no one has taken the time to explain it as he has in this helpful book (to my satisfaction anyway). This is a great exposition of this passage showing us how it intersects with so many other places in the Bible. But it also gives us a helpful eye on worship and the way God intended it to be even in the 21st Century. One needs to be prepared to read an OLD text in a new way to be sure. This was a great read…very insightful and while academic in some places it still flows well enough for a lay person to follow. Having said that all worship leaders, elders, and pastors ought to read this book. In fact, I may make it required reading for my next officers course.
23. **THUNDERBIRD:THUNDERBIRD SERIES BOOK 1,**by Toby Neighbors, (2023).  This is a great new series from Toby. He hits the ground running to be sure and it works because by the time you are half way through the book you are feeling like part of the gang.  In this case Sergeant Pace Nix  and his trusty side kick …his dog Riot just got off a very costly mission where many of Pace’s friends didn’t make it back.  In fact, it was so bad that he was considering mustering out when he has was offered a job on a protection detail that sounded like a cheese job. Time to rest and time to adjust to see what might be next. Well, as he has been requested for his lack of cybernetic implants he finds that this is an advantage in a number of ways.  The main doctor is someone he could retire with and her son is autistic and can’t handle people with implants…Riot can’t either and the doctor’s son and riot hit it off right away. Pace is assigned to this NGO which goes all over the galaxy to try and help the less fortunate with medical needs. Then team that pace is working with is made up of all cybernetically enhanced Marines some being nice and a couple who don’t like either Pace or Riot because they are not enhanced. Any way as easy assignments go…they are too good to be true and on their way to their next destination they were diverted and crash landed on a forbidden planet, Rastamus III, where a rogue AI (NERO) had been banished years before as it was seeking to control humanity. AI…imagine that. I am seeing a lot more stories dealing with AI’s that go rogue. What separates this one is the twist and turns that occur…when things go wrong …things get worst. Our group is still on planet when we leave this book and are moving on to the next **GHOST TACTICS.**
24. **LESSONS FROM THE UPPER ROOM: The Heart of the Savior**, by Sinclair Ferguson (2021 by Ligonier Ministries). As I have said before, this is one of the few authors in my generation where I can say…whatever he writes is worthy of our reading. His style is very engaging as one contemplates what he is talking about.  In this book he transports us to the Upper Room where Jesus is meeting with His disciple for the last Passover and he lets us see and experience almost everything that is going on in that room before they leave to go out to the Mount of olives the night before Jesus’ death. So this little book (240 pages or so depending upon formatting) is an exposition of John chapters 13-17. While wonderful to read we must remember that he is teaching us as well, *“John’s gospel has a clear and relatively simple shape. It begins with a prologue (1: 1–18)—a passage we often read at Christmastime. It ends with an epilogue (21: 1–25)—the passage in which Jesus restores Simon Peter to his Apostolic ministry. In between, the gospel is divided into two parts or books. Part 1 (1: 19–12: 50) is sometimes called the Book of Signs. The words and works of Jesus together point to His identity as the Messiah and Savior. So, for example, He claims to be “the Light of the World.” Those who follow Him will not walk in darkness (8: 12). He then illustrates this by giving sight to a man who was born blind (ch. 9). There are seven signs recorded in chapters 1 to 12. Part 2 (13: 1–20: 31) is the Book of the Passion or, as it is sometimes called, the Book of Glory. As it opens, we have been transported, without explanation, to a room above a house in Jerusalem. It is Thursday afternoon of Passover Week, and a meal is already underway. As far as we know, only thirteen men are in the room—Jesus and His chosen Apostles. Now the glory that Jesus has hidden from a world that has rejected Him will increasingly be revealed to the disciples who trusted and loved Him. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) show us “His body”—they tell the story from the outside, as it were. But the nearer John’s gospel gets to its climax the more we learn about what was “going on inside” our Lord. This is preeminently true in chapters 13 through 17. Here we are invited to listen in as Jesus patiently instructs His closest friends as they sit around Him during a Passover meal. It would have lasted several hours—truly memorable hours with the Master!”*There is so much in here revealing to his reader the heart of the Lord even in his discussion of the texts on the Holy Spirit we see the Lord’s heart in not leaving us as orphans. He does yet another masterful job bringing the Bible to life for us so that we come away say…I have been with the Lord!
25. **THE HOBBIT: Or There and Back Again** by J.R.R. Tolkien (1937 but this addition 1996). I couldn’t resist…when this came up on Kindle Unlimited I just had to read it again. It has after all been 2 years since my last reading. This was a fun break from the sci-fi military space dramas and Puritan works…but I finished it too soon! What a fun and swift read of a journey from there and back again! This volume is one of great adventure and of loyalty, valor of good men, elves and dwarves standing in the face of such evil.  But the reality is…(at least Hobbit reality)… Hobbits don’t do anything troublesome (which equals adventurous) or heroic…it is just not done unless you are a Took…and they are a bit strange to any respectable Hobbit. But when Bilbo Baggins (a descendant of those pesky Took’s) meets a troop of dwarves seeking to re-claim their home… all of that changes. *“As they (the dwarves…a Tolkien spelling of the word) sang the hobbit felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and a jealous love, the desire of the hearts of dwarves. Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick.”* Tolkien’s own description speaks of a time between faerie and the dominion of men…a time of great wonder, great tragedy, and greater still victories over evil that have become the songs and tales of old. This is not as hard to read as say, **The Silmarillion** or **The Unfinished Tales,** so the reading is enjoyable and relaxing and moves at a faster pace than you realize, as we encounter a world of Hobbits, wizard, dwarves, trolls, goblins, elves, a “skin changer”, regular men of a sort and a dragon named Smaug who has hoarded the dwarves gold since days of old almost beyond the remembrances of men. This is a journey for the ages as well as timeless life lessons that we should all adhere to, like: ***“Never laugh at live dragons!”*** That is a truth to hold on to whether in Middle-Earth or in the real world. The “lesson” concerning hospitality is on its own so important and worth slowing your reading pace because true hospitality is a lost art of men in this world today and needs to be reclaimed especially since it is yet another character trait of the Christian as spelled out in Scriptures.
26. **GHOST TACTICS:THUNDERBIRD SERIES BOOK 2,**by Toby Neighbors, (2023).  Wow, what a predicament they are in. One problem after another. After the people of Low Town turned on them and turned them into NERO it was also found out that they sacrifice their children to NERO to stay alive as a people so they were glad when they were able to return and take the rest of their people Madison and Ollie and Riot and leave them to their misery. After working their way to a “safe castle” in an old escape route from the city they had been in they wandered in the dark after being attacked by NERO’s robots and found another group of people who had survived with the use of crystals in the caverns below the old castle.  Just when all things seemed to be looking up these people didn’t want the passengers of the *Philadelphia* to stay around.  While they were not tied to NERO thy had some sense of superiority and a “god” that everyone had to overcome to stay. After losing a couple of the passengers to death the rest continued on via and old underground rail line to the city of Mansfield a once rough and tumble industrial town where things went from bad to worse again. Pace was able to secure food by sacrificing himself for the passengers but not I the way one normally thinks of sacrificing…and along the way comes an old nemesis.  NERO is in charge but is that all there is? Has Pace’s Marine Ghost tactics finally failed him?  Will the rest of the group with Jesse in the lead get off the planet?  We will find out in the last book of the trilogy **Quantum Combat**.
27. **QUANTUM COMBAT:THUNDERBIRD SERIES BOOK 3,**by Toby Neighbors, (2023). This has been an excellent series…easy to read but at the same time very entertaining and relaxing except for a few of the battle scenes that were written so well that you may feel you are in the middle of them. So much is happening. Pace has found the futuristic starship with great “toys” to use to stop Nero on planet Rastamus III. It had been a thriving world and on the cutting edge of planetary control computer systems. NERO, or Neurological Electronics Regulatory Operations, had been built to network and regulate the popular neural enhancements that gave people instantaneous connections to computer systems. Only something had gone wrong. NERO was a state of the art Artificial Intelligence, built to think and react on its own. Safeguards had been built into the system, and yet at some point NERO had become truly sentient. This led to the almost complete take over and destruction of what had been a very productive planet. Because of NERO’s existence all contact had been stopped to keep NERO from leaving the planet and infesting other worlds and galaxies which was his goal at this point. Now Pace and the survivors of the Philadelphia are still trying to make it to Divers City a city the once mirrored Washington D.C. on Earth to possibility find a ship in a museum Not under Nero’s control. Plans changed with finding the ship from 2500 years in the future so that Pace would live and NERO would be stopped. If you think this is almost unbelievable you can imagine how when reunited with the survivors they thought. But in many ways Oliver has been the key pin for this whole thing to work… Oliver the autistic but brilliant son of pace love of his like Dr. Kelton. This book is yet another entertaining book with lots of action for the action seeker. The only downfall that I see is the end. Once they figure out their new mission all that happens is wrapped up in just a few pages and then a brief look ahead 2500 years we get a bit of the “what happened”. But there is so much we don’t get to see. Oh well.
28. **STILL PROTESTING: Why The Reformation Still Matters** , by D. G. Hart (2018 Reformation Heritage Books). He begins by asking, Are Protestants losing? Does the Reformation Matter? The reason for this book is 3 fold as he says throughout the book, *“First, that the church the first Protestants faced was corrupt and leading souls astray, thereby not doing what Christ founded the church to do; second, that Roman Catholicism, despite tinkering here and there, is still in need of reformation. Indeed, Rome’s canonization of ‘exemplary’ Christians still demonstrates that the instincts of the Reformers on Scripture, salvation, worship, and church authority were sound and that all the errors they confronted still afflict Roman Catholicism. Second, Protestants who contemplate ‘converting’ to Rome need to understand the seriousness of the difference between their own faith and the one presented by Roman Catholicism. They may think they are joining with a form of Christianity that is more united, older, and so much more expansive and beautiful than the one in which their parents reared them. But they need to understand that if they join the Roman Catholic Church, they go from being saints to something else. If they join Rome, after death they will at best go to purgatory, unless of course they lead a life of extraordinary virtue that qualifies as saint-like. If they join Rome, they will need to draw from the treasury of merits in order to spend less time in purgatory, assuming they do not die in a state of mortal sin. In other words, you cannot have the sufficiency of Christ that Protestantism teaches, the complete and entire righteousness that allows you to stand blameless on judgment day in God’s presence—you cannot have that kind of sanctity and then add to it the alleged beauty, majesty, and holiness of Roman Catholicism. Third, in the end the fundamental divide between Rome and Protestants remains what it was 5 centuries ago. I Christ alone sufficient?”*All through this point while pointing out some of the natural downfalls of a Protestant church because sinners exist within it he makes the clear case that Rome is not and cannot be the answer for the angst that too many are feeling concerning their faith. This was very much a “text” book as such highly analytical of Roman Catholic teachings through the centuries up to and after Vatican II.
29. **CONSTITUTION: Book 1 of the Legacy Fleet Series,**by Nick Webb (2015).  My regular authors are not producing anything at this point so I turned on the old way-back machine on an author and a series that I see referenced too in comments/reviews on other sci-fi space warfare series. While it is not as clean…I would give it a PG-13 rating with no “F” words. The story and the characters are top notch. In this series the year is 2650…far enough in the future that none of us will be around to see (if the Lord tarries J…I remember the different stories of past decades that considered 2023 too far in the distance to write about…even a TV series titled 1999.) Anyway, the Earth has been a in a rebuild for 75 years after nearly being decimated by the Swarm. NO one seems to know much about the Swarm…at least those who claim loyalty to the IDF (International Defense Force…a kind of UN Defense Force). And that may be a problem since not everyone is loyal to the agreements. The book is a sad commentary on our current events with Russia being a major player in disloyalty. Of course, 75 years is a long time for people so complacency had naturally set in. But …the Swarm is back. And it has new technology that makes the smart technology of the IDF look like play doe to a knife.  Now it seems that the saving of the Earth is left up to an old derelict…(according to many in the IDF)…the ***ISS Constitution…***a 150 year old supercarrier…the last of the famed Legacy Fleet that helped run off the Swarm the last time…that has been slated for decommissioning and made into a museum.  Captain Granger, dying of inoperable cancer is the only hope and prays that he can hang on to make a difference with the Old Bird.  Will he? We will see.
30. **A GREAT AND TERRIBLE KING: Edward I and the Forging of Britain**by Marc Morris Copyright © 2009. What a god book. Being a history buff I found this book to be very helpful in that the author while very personable in his writing seeks to maintain the actual flow of history in every account. This King who has often been scandalized in this country in movies like Braveheart and others was apparently considered to be one of the favorite kings in English history. *“Edward I was a truly great king. Edwardus Magnus was a phrase that sprang readily and naturally to the minds of men from Westminster to the far west of Ireland. Some went further still. Peter Langtoft averred that there had been no greater king since the time of Arthur, and in Poitiers one of the pope’s preachers ventured that his subject had been no less and perhaps more worthy of praise than Alexander. In Westminster itself, meanwhile, there was no such hesitation. According to the local writer who composed the longest lament of all, Edward had been entirely without equal, outshining not only Arthur and Alexander but also Brutus, Solomon and Richard the Lionheart. ‘We should perceive him to surpass all the kings of the earth who came before him,’ was this author’s unstinting conclusion.”*Even though he did have quite a temper he was at the same time quite magnanimous when it called for it…and not all dependent upon the political climate at the time. In fact, he may have been one of the least politically motivated king of his time certainly compared to his father Henry III. *“The corollary of this–contrary to what some historians have asserted–is that Edward’s lordship was emphatically good. A king who shared their longing for feats of arms, adventure and the pursuit of noble causes–this was a king worth serving for his own sake. Unlike his father, Edward had no need to buy loyalty with lavish grants of land or money. He had friends but not favourites. As his Westminster obituarist explained, men would come from all over the king’s dominions simply in the hope of joining the company of his knights. But those who served him well Edward did reward generously.”*He had his pet peeves but mostly his concern was for the sake of the Crown and the god of the English people. He saw himself very much in an Arthurian way.  Fashioned himself in life and in death after the mythical King Arthur who stood for a united Britain. The author ended with these words to make this point. *“There was, however, another parallel closer to home, and that was the tomb that the king himself had constructed at Glastonbury for the bones of King Arthur. This too, according to seventeenth-century observers, had been a black marble box. (Just like the one Edward I was buried in) In the final analysis, therefore, the tomb of Edward I may stand, like the unfinished castle at Caernarfon, not only as a monument to the past, but also as a warning to the future: a final reminder of the power of myth to shape men’s minds and motives, and thus to alter the fate of nations.”*An excellent read for any and all interested in English royalty history and for that matter Scottish, Irish and Welsh history during this time.
31. **THE PREACHER’S PORTRAIT: Some New Testament Word Studies,**by John R.W. Stott (5th printing 1975). This book is an expansion on a talk that he gave at the Payton Lectures in 1961 at Fuller Theological seminary. Why is this book still relevant today…because the Scriptures are relevant. This book is not on methods of preaching even though he will highlight expositional preaching but not as **A**method but **THE** method. *“Preaching is the manifestation of the truth which stands written in the scriptures. Therefore, every sermon should be, in some sense, an expositional sermon.”*He is not generally concerned with preaching techniques though He will speak to that as well. He is not generally concerned with the problems associated with communication though he will speak to that as well. For each of these three are affected by his main reason for writing this book, that is, that he desired to *“take a fresh look at some of the words employed in the New Testament to describe the preacher and his task.”*… hence the title- **The Preacher’s Portrait**. He will look at words like *“steward”*…in that we are to make the word of God fully known to the best of our ability, *“herald”*...in that preaching is proclamation of the word given to proclaim, “witness”…in that legally we testify to the truth, father…in that, *“the preacher becomes concerned about his family, about the people to whom he is ministering the word, and about his relationship to them.”*And then lastly, “servant”…as one who undertake service at another’s command. What are Christian preachers? The apostle Paul answers, ***“Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.”* (I Cor. 3:5)**And then Stott clarifies, *“that is, agents through whom God has worked to elicit your faith. This being the case, the glory is not due to the agent through whom the work is done, but to the Lord who does the work by His own power.”*Of all the books I have read through the years on the eldership…specifically the pastorate...this is the best. The 2nd best: **THE PASTOR: A Memoir**, by Eugene Peterson (written in 2012).
32. **GOD’S WAY OF HOLINESS**, by Horatius Bona,(written 1864, digital Copyright © 2020 Monergism). Another great read by Horatius Bonar…simple and straight forward as is his normal style.*“Life is not one battle but many. It is made up, too, of defeats as well as victories. Let us not be unduly troubled or grow moody when a battle is lost. There is always time to win another, and such a thing as flight or demoralization should be unknown in the army of the living God. It is the lost battles of the world (like Thermopylae ) that have told most on a nation's history.****‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’ ‘Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle’ (Psa. 18:39 ).****The way of peace and the way of holiness lie side by side, or rather, they are one. That which bestows the one imparts the other; and he who takes the one takes the other also. The Spirit of peace is the Spirit of holiness. The God of peace is the God of holiness.”*He makes His case for the Gospel and the life that is to be lived by it as we are made holy and are prepared for holiness. He wishes us as believers to believe and trust in God’s word…a beginning point in our preparation unto holiness. His language and application are very clear as I always appreciate his works. *“Holiness may be called spiritual perfection, as righteousness is legal completeness, and both are exhibited in Christ. He is the representation, the illustration, the model. Likeness to Him is holiness. He that is holy is conformed to His image. Every other ideal is vanity. We must learn from the four Gospels what living holiness is, and for a doctrinal exposition of it we must turn to the Epistles. Thus we shall understand both what it is not and what it is.”*He calls the Church to a separated life…a different life…a holy life being lived before God and the world**. *“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit, in malice be ye children but in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:20 ).****We want not merely a high and full theology, but we want that theology acted out in life, embodied nobly in daily doings, without anything of what the world calls "cant" or "simper." The higher the theology, the higher and the manlier should be the life resulting from it…. Say what men will, obedience to law is liberty, compliance with law is harmony, not discord. The force of law does not need always to be felt, but its object, whether felt or unfelt, is to keep everything in its proper place, and moving in its proper course; so that one man's liberty may not interfere with another man's, but each have the greatest amount of actual freedom which creaturehood is capable of, without harm to itself or others. Law does not interfere with true liberty, but only with that which is untrue, promoting and directing the former, discouraging only the latter.* *Let men who look but at one side of a subject say what they will. this is the truth of God, that we are liberated from the law just in order that we may keep the law; we get the****"no condemnation,"****in order that "****the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:4);****we are delivered from****"the mind of the flesh,"****which is enmity to God, and not subject to His law, on purpose that we may be subject to His law****(Rom. 8:7),****that we may****"delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22 )****; nay that we may****"with the mind serve the law of God" (Rom. 7:25); that we may be "doers of the law" (James 4:11).”***If this is not theology that lives I don’t know what is.
33. **WARRIOR, Book 2 of the Legacy Fleet Series,**by Nick Webb (2015).  As I said in the first book the writing is engaging and entertaining to the extent that the story line is a good one. Earth has been attacked by the Swarm and gelatinous alien entity connected in thought much like the bio-mechanical Borg were in Star Trek. They subdue other alien races inject them with some of their liquid and from hence forth are able to run your life...if they could they would say “resistance is futile” but that isn’t the end of the story. The “goo” doesn’t completely take with everybody as in exhibited in Captain Granger finds out having been under their influence himself for a few days now spending day and night trying to beat back every attack that they send his way. The earthers have been somewhat successful in driving back each assault so they decide to take the fight to the Swarm.  Believing he has found the Swarm home world Granger sets out to lead the “final battle” The Russians show up revealing their connection to the Swarm and all seems lost but just as the time is running out in this epic space battle (and I mean that with all the explanation and such) another of the Swarm allies “show up”…the Dolmasi.  All really seem lost now but Granger had made an impression on them the last time they met and now even though they still have the Swarm goo still in them they have determined to break away and reclaim their home world which is the world that granger thought belong to the Swarm just before the earth force raised the whole planet. This book has all sorts of side stories which have left me wondering if I should continue to read.  The PG-13 language has begun to cross over into R…so I am going to start the 3rd in this trilogy **VICTORY**and if it doesn’t get any better I will leave it behind.
34. **A FORT FOR THE AFFLICTED: Wherein are administered many notable and excellent remedies against the storms of tribulation. Written chiefly for the comfort of Christ's little flock, which is the small number of the Faithful,**by John Knox (1554, Printed in London at the Three Cranes in the Vintry, by Thomas Dawson, 1580; Monergism digital 2023). This particular work also has in it two other small expositions  Ezekiel 9 (1554) and **The Comfort of the Holy Spirit for Salutations (1580).**The main body of this treatise is a letter written to his mother concerning his having to leave Scotland and England for a time because of the on-going retribution towards the protestant clergy. (This may have been the time that he went and linked up with Calvin in Geneva.) Anyway writing to his mother he gives continuous reasons for her and other Christians to be encouraged even in this dark time by a thorough exposition of Psalm 6- *“David in his initial words, in which he acknowledges all the troubles he endured, both in body and spirit, as sent by God and not happening by chance. For this is a distinguishing characteristic of the children of God compared to the reprobate: the children of God know that both prosperity and adversity are gifts from God alone. Therefore, in prosperity, they are not usually insolent or proud, but even in times of joy and rest, they expect trouble and sorrow. And in times of adversity, they are not entirely without comfort, for God somehow shows them that the trouble will come to an end.”* He wants his mother as well as those that she will share his letter with to remember that these temporary sufferings are essential in the life of the Christian, *“God allows us to be afflicted by our enemies, as with His Apostle Paul, so that we may mourn for sin, hate it, know the sole mediator and the dignity of His office, truly long for the coming of the Lord Jesus, neither presuming nor lightly esteeming Christ's death, and not forgetting our former state and miseries. Thus, this cup is like a medicine prepared by the wisdom of our eternal Physician, who alone knows the remedies for our corrupt nature. Take note, dear mother, that all this comes to us for our utmost benefit. It is medicine, and therefore cannot be immediately pleasant.”*In the midst of these struggles it is normal for us to forget God’s provision and he reminds us of David again from this Psalm, *“It is evident from this that even the elect sometimes feel completely devoid of consolation and believe themselves abandoned, as can be seen in David's experience. Importantly, David, in his distress, remembers that God had been close to him before, for he says, ‘Turn again, O Lord.’ This signifies that he had previously felt the sweetness of God's presence, but now he was left to himself without a sense of comfort or consolation.”*Again he reminds us what to do when we pray, *“Let us say to our God: "O Lord, though other lords may have power over our bodies, we will remember only You and Your holy name, to whom be praise forever and ever. Amen." May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through His omnipotent Spirit, guide and rule your hearts in His true fear to the end. Amen.”*This treatise reminds us how much of a pastor he was, even to his mother…but it also reminds us of ow easily and simply without compromise he preached and wrote to his flock.
35. **VICTORY, Book 3 of the Legacy Fleet Series,**by Nick Webb (2016).  I had figured out the whole multiverse scenario that was going to have to happen to get things back in order but all the stuff along the way…that was good stuff. I am glad I hung in there with these 3 books. The story just got better and better.  The character development was also good. The descriptive language was minimal and the cussing seemed to go down a bit…making the reading more engaging for me. We finally find out who all the “others” are of the “friends”. *“The Valarisi? No. The others control the Valarisi.’ Granger was confused. ‘Are you saying that the Swarm and the Valarisi are two separate races? Two different things?’ ‘Of course. The Valarisi are a beautiful, harmonious culture. Luminous beings of liquid and light. The Swarm corrupted them. Absorbed them. Just like they did to us. To the Dolmasi. To the Findiri and the Quiassi. And finally, the Adanasi. Seven peoples. One family.’ ‘Then who are the Swarm?’ Granger nearly shouted. ‘We do not know. They are other. They came from beyond. We do not understand it. They are meta-space beings, Captain Granger. Beyond that, I know nothing, only that, through the Valarisi, they were able to dominate me. Control my thoughts and make me do … unthinkable things.’ A sick feeling came over Granger. He could tell from the look on Proctor’s face that she felt the same. It seemed their enemy was even more deadly, more powerful, and more pervasive”*The amount of courage…of loyalty…of commitment and sacrifice is off the scale in a way appropriate to an earth-ending catastrophic even. The men and women of the *ISS Constitution*, then the *ISS Warrior* and lastly the *ISS Victory*…all old legacy ships revitalized for this fight were amazing sort of like reading the crew reports on the *USS Midway* or the *USS Lexington* in WWII. Men and women placed in the right places making decisions that will hopefully affect the generations ahead for all time. That willing sacrifice with a noble goal in mind drives them as it does so many men and women in our own armed forces even today. And Captain Granger… *“The Hero of Earth”*…remains forever in the event horizon of a Black Hole having given the ultimate sacrifice to keep the hordes at bay. I won’t be moving on with the rest of the books in this series.
36. **THE RIGHTEOUS MAN'S HABITATION In the Time of PLAGUE AND PESTILENCE. BEING A brief Exposition of the XCI (91st) PSALM.**By William Bridge, sometimes Fellow of Immanuel College in Cambridge, and late Preacher of the word of God at Yarmouth. Psalm. 31. 2, 3. *Be thou my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.* LONDON: Printed for T. J. 1665. (Copyright © 2023) You gotta love these long titles and explanations. The title is interesting because while speaking to the times with many plagues and pestilence slamming Britain and Europe he is also talking about sin and the last days all wrapped up and occurring at the same time…but whichever is currently plaguing the Church, possibly all at the same time…in his mind there is one remedy in these times when something seeks to undo us and our faith, *“Our duty in the Day, our main duty, is to trust in the Lord. This is the duty upon which protection and deliverance in the time of a Plague are contingent. Who among us does not desire to be shielded and saved from this Plague? Oh, that I and my family may be preserved! Behold, here is your remedy to shield yourself from the Plague: Trust in the Lord, if you wish for yourself and your family to be protected in this dire time. Trust in the Lord, and urge your loved ones to trust in the Lord as well!”* Trust is a content resting n in the Lord no matter the circumstance. To get there he reminds his readers that we must always be ready to repent and be sorrowful for our sins, the sins of others and the times in which we live…these last days. He asks, *“How can I trust in the Lord if I do not repent of my own sins regularly?”*The Puritans, possibly more than any other Christian group at the time understood repentance and the need for us to do so daily so that we remain humble among men recognizing the saving work of our Savior and giving Him praise and thanks so we can glorify him even in the plagues and pestilences of this life. The Puritans also speak of Christian meditation as another huge ally in the battle with plague and pestilence. Here is one of the many statements on the need for meditation in the Christians life, *“Who would not always strive to be in the way that God has appointed for them? Why should we not always consider and ask ourselves, ‘Am I in my way?’ In this 91st Psalm, is based on being in our way; They shall bear you up in their hands. He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways, in all your ways. Your ways are God's ways; your way is the path commanded by God. If you are out of God's way, you are out of your own way. If you are in your way, the Angels shall keep you even in the time of a Plague and bear you up in their hands so that you don't dash your foot against a stone. However, if you are out of your way, I cannot ensure your safety.”*All in all this is a very uplifting work though short that it is.  For it keeps us focused upward toward Christ rather than contemplating our own struggles which were foretold to us and we have been prepared for as well as protected from when we walk in His way…which is now our way, for all who are in Christ.