**2024 Pastor’s Reading List**

1. **CONSIDER JESUS or Thoughts for daily Duty, Service and Suffering** , by Octavius Winslow (1870, Monergism digital 2011). This is one of the earliest daily devotional/instructional books I have ever come across. It is both devotional and analytical…extremely stimulating a read. Winslow himself gives the best explanation as to why he wrote this book: *“****Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess." Hebrews 3:1*** *It is a great privilege of the believer to live by the day upon Jesus. He cannot properly or safely go beyond it, nor has he any especial promise to warrant his so doing. The promise is,* ***"as your days so shall your strength be."*** *And it is no little achievement of faith if, indeed, its strength lasts even to this limited period. Each day's need is enough to task all our energies, and exhaust all our supplies, without our* ***"taking thought for the morrow."*** *But what a mercy thus to live upon Christ! To feel that, when we exchange the morning's dreams for the day's stern and trying realities, that the prayer of faith may draw large supplies from Jesus; and, that thus replenished and equipped, we may safely reach its close unscathed by the fiery ordeal through which we have passed. To aid the Christian in this daily life, these pages have been written. The subjects selected are, for the most part, of a doctrinal and practical nature--subjects, indeed, upon which ponderous tomes have been written--and yet the plan pursued by the author has necessarily restricted his meditations to the smallest possible space, and to a mere fragmentary and elementary unfolding of each topic. But, unpretending as his work is, it may meet the needs of the weary, the suffering, and the sorrowing believer not having time or strength for a more elaborate volume; and thus be as a small casket of perfume, incensing some couch of languor, and filling some chamber of sickness with the fragrance of that Name which is above every name, and which, to those who know and love it, is as ointment poured forth--the divine, the precious, the ever-to-be-adored name of--JESUS!”* Again we are hit with the practice of meditations a practice that the author uses to aid our own meditations and to help us understand how deep we should be thinking about our God and savior Jesus Christ. He covers over 25 topics in our consider Jesus…the lowliness of His birth…the exercise of His influence…His obedience to the Divine Law…his popularity as well as His being hated…His temptation…affliction…being forsaken…his bereavement… to His second coming. Topics that many have questions about and topics for which he gives excellent answers. Highly recommended as a daily devotional guide. All of the “Consider Jesus” sections capture your heart.
2. **THE GLORY OF CHRIST In Modern English,** by John Owen (transcribed in 1684, originally published in 1691 [8 years after his death] edited by Jason Roth) 2019). Jason takes the original and makes it extremely readable without losing the author or his intent. Modern English helps the modern student to actually engage since most books written in the 20th and 21st Centuries do not come close I composition and grammar along with the fact that many of the words are so archaic that many would simply not read it. Jason does a needed service to the church to be sure. This book contains much of Owen’s heart as often stated by those who are more familiar with his works than myself (and I have read a lot). This book was perhaps his final book before his death and so a certain passion is seen and felt in this one over perhaps his other memorable works. Throughout his work it is clear that he has a passion for the glory of Christ…but in this book he seeks to communicate this passion as to get others passionate enough to undertake this duty and privilege of being a lifelong student of the glory of Christ for our edification and the edification of other…the blessing and glory to God. *“I will not, therefore, make any defense for the publishing of the ensuing meditations. These were first intended for the exercise of my own mind and then for the edification of a private congregation, which is likely to be the last service at which I will deliver them in that way. Some of you may, by the consideration of these meditations, be called to attend to the same duty with more diligence than before, as you receive directions for its discharge. Others may be motivated to communicate your greater light and knowledge for the benefit of many. My design in this preface is to give a brief account of the necessity and use, in both life and death, of the duty I exhort you to.”* The final words of such giants in the faith ought to be read by each successive generation of believers and this work certainly falls into that category. His work is so contemporary and in such need for we have found ourselves so focused on our feelings and seeking things that will not benefit our faith in anyway. He states this in no uncertain terms for his audience which could be us today; *“Therefore, everything we involve ourselves in has the root of trouble and sorrow in it. Some labor in want, poverty, and hardship all of their days, and others have very few hours free from pains and sickness. All of these trials, along with others of a similar nature, are heightened today by the season of calamity where we find ourselves. Nearly every facet of every nation is filled with confusion, disorder, danger, distress, and trouble. Wars and rumors of wars abound with tokens of further approaching judgments. Nations are distressed with perplexities, and men’s hearts fail for fear as they look at those things which are coming on the earth. In many places, there is no peace for those who go out, nor to those who come in; instead, great anxieties are on the inhabitants of the whole world. Nations and cities are destroyed, for God inflicts them with all adversity. And in the meantime, the ungodly deeds of wicked men further increase the vexation and troubles of life. There are also deplorable sufferings of many who follow their consciences, and all sorts of Christians abound in divisions and animosities.”* There are so many quotable sections in this book. Far too many to list…a must read.
3. **O LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET ME GO: Facing Death with Courageous Confidence in God**, edited byNancy Guthrie (2011). The Church doesn’t see these kinds of books any more…but she should. This is comprised of 22 short meditations from pastors and theologians from Martin Luther, to Richard Sibbes, to R.C. Sproul and John Piper. All of them deal with the way a believer should live and die…with emphasis on dying. Joseph Bayly challenges us with many statements but this one continues to resonate with me. *“Christians claim to believe that heaven…being present with Christ…is so wonderful, and yet act as if going there were the greatest tragedy.”* Another main point of these short meditations is the Christians need of daily letting go of the this world and the things we hold dear in this life. When our son was killed letting go made perfect sense…but as the years have accumulated I find myself too close once again to even the “good’ things of this life …so much so that I don’t long for the next enough. Calvin says, *“For we must hold that our mind never rises seriously to desire and aspire after the future until it has learned to despise this present life.”* Many of the Reformers and Puritans teach like this statement from Jonathan Edwards (it is not original to him) *“The day of the godly man’s death is better than the day of his birth.”* Also I have said many times when referring to heaven as my real home, someone that I truly love is there and I can’t wait to be where my heart is. Thomas Boston says something similar when he says, *“A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one…we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us.”* Joni Eareckson Tada confirms this when she says*, “If your heart is with your loved ones and they are home with the Lord, then heaven is home for you, too. A broken heart leads to the true contentment of asking less of this life because more is coming in the next.”* This book and these meditations are written to prepare us to face the difficult reality of death so that even in death we can give glory to the Lord.
4. **THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR: Wrestling with sin, Satan,, the world and the flesh,** by Rev. Isaac Ambrose(1604-1664) (printed originally approx.. 1661, “modernized and updated and abridged” in 1837 and has been printed continuously since…digitally by Monergism 2023). Ambrose has been characterized as a quiet fighter for the gospel…one that was very affable even to those who he opposed. But in typical Puritan fashion he as very clear when making his point and making it unapologetically, *“A man thinks to highly of himself, because the sun shines upon him, and the air breathes on him, as for a sinner to be proud of his grace. Yet not a few trust to their own righteousness for salvation. How little do such men resemble St. Paul?*” One might wonder why he speaks of combating sin and the flesh as if they are two different things. Well, they are… but they do intertwine and we are willing to compromise in both that is why he says, *“The flesh is a worse enemy than the devil himself.”* He writes very succinctly telling his readers of the schemes of sin, Satan, the world and the flesh in a way that is very understandable and relatable. But not stopping there , he goes on to give the necessary ammunition from the scriptures to not simply endure the onslaught of these but also to go on the offensive against them so that our flesh can be mortified and we can in Christ gain victory over Satan and the world. He breaks his logical approach down to 4 periods of our life: in childhood, at our first conversion, during the prime of life and at the time of death. He speaks to how these 4 seek to do us in before conversion and then afterwards to so weakened our testimony that we leave this earth the least assured of all creatures. *“When Satan fails to lead men to presumption, he will strive to send them to despondency and despair. This is the gulf that swallowed up many souls. If he prevails here, he gains his point, and makes sure of his prey; that he may prevail, he sets before them all the gross sins which they have ever committed, and all the judgments which those sins deserve. Oh the depth of Satan! He strives hard to keep the soul from believing; and when he fails in this, he shakes our faith, so that we may have neither peace nor joy in believing. See how he dealt with Simon Peter, and with Job. When he could not destroy their faith, he endeavored to destroy their comforts. So he deals with believers in general.”* An extremely worthwhile book in helping us to be able to navigate through this life with the 3 or 4 plaguing us constantly. That is why we must be on guard and use the defensive and offensive armor of God and fight against a foothold for these.
5. **THE SINFULNESS OF SIN AND THE FULLNESS OF Christ,** BY William Bridge (1600-1670, a member of the Westminster Divines preached in 1667 and transcribed word for word as was preached by Bridge. Digitalized by Monergism 2023 ). This publication is of two sermons that make perfect book ends for one another. One of the most well-known quotes from the sermon the *Sinfulness of Sin* is, *“On the contrary, as God is holy, all holy, only holy, altogether holy, and always holy, so sin is sinful, all sinful, only sinful, altogether sinful, and always sinful.”* (Gen. 6:5). There was so much good in both of these sermons…this one booklet I’m not sure where to begin. I found this string of statements to be extremely thought provoking…so much so that I had to re-read this a few times to make sure I got it; *“Consider what is a worse evil than Hell or the Devil. That must surely be a very great and exceedingly evil thing. Sin is worse than the Devil because the Devil is a creature made by God, but sin is not God's creation. It is worse than Hell because Hell is also created by God, but sin is not. It is worse to be given over to sin than to the Devil. If a person is given over to the Devil, it is so that their soul may be saved. However, if a person is given over to sin, it is for the destruction and not the salvation of their soul. Therefore, sin is worse than Hell or the Devil…The greater the obligations a person sins against, the worse and greater their sin. Through the Gospel, we are brought under great obligations. By sinning under the Gospel, what do we do? We make the mercy of God, our greatest friend, become our greatest adversary. We sin against Mercy and Grace, thereby engaging the very mercy of God to turn against us…The more capable a sin is of defending itself through knowledge, arguments, and distinctions, the worse and greater that sin is. A person living under the Gospel possesses knowledge and can defend their sin through various distinctions. Sins bred under the Gospel are capable of defending themselves with knowledge drawn from the Gospel, making them even worse.”* Just like Isaac Ambrose in **The Christian Warrior**, Bridge wants his audience to understand and know without a doubt of the depth of sinfulness and likewise He wants his audience to know and understand the fullness of Christ. *T*he most quoted quote from the sermon *The Fullness of Christ* is this one; *“The fullness of Christ is the Church actually being all that God intends it to be, the people of God together, fully alive and flourishing, fully like Christ.”* The simple answers are often the best answers. *“In Jesus Christ, there is the greatest excellence with utmost propriety. And this excellency is under the best ownership, to the extent that you can claim it with a double ‘my’.* ***‘My God, My God,’*** *says David* ***(Psalm 22:1).*** *‘****My Lord and my God’****, says Thomas* ***(John 20:28****). There is such ownership in this excellency that you can claim it with a double "my." And it is an ownership that can never be lost.* ***"And no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28-29).*** A couple of sermons every Christian ought to read at some point throughout this journey.
6. **THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN SISKO: The Life of Sarfleet’s Legendary Captain and Bajor’s Emissary,** by Jake Sisko and edited by Derek Tyler Attico and Benny Russell, along the way (2023…Stardate 55902.0). This book is based on interviews by Jake with many on Deep Space 9 after what is called the Sisko Event – Benjamiin Sisko sent a beam of light, energy, definitely information…a personal message to Jake so that he would know his father better so as to prepare him for a future of moving forward rather than one where Jake would stay hole up, reclusive, not knowing…but in the end it is hard to say beyond the message which would take Jake 2 years to sort through. This information was sent in the form of 50 hours of video informing them all Sisko family, Starfleet and the Bajorans that this is where he is and will stay for the time being. And this may be transcribed by Jake and edited by Derek but these are the words of Benjamin Lafayette Sisko. (Full disclosure, I know this is a fictional story with all fictional characters…but for anyone like myself that thoroughly enjoys Star Trek: Deep Space 9 this book is a gem and a wealth of knowledge about a beloved character that little was known about except his Starfleet career. LOL) Benjamin’s life began in New Orleans to a family who majored in hard work with as little of the Trek technology as possible. In the restaurant his dad cooked everything by hand…never a replicator…and in the hotel everything was cleaned and cared for by the hand of people…no robots. As Benjamin grew this was normal for him. He was even homeschooled until high school to keep him grounded in the basic of life…good work ethic and quality of life without too much technology. Then one day he stumbles on a transporter that his family used to transport goods and fresh food in on. It was a well-kept secret but one “ride” on the transporter and his life would never be the same again. He got the technology bug. Never gifted with cooking as another brother and his father we one day coming home from an outing he declared that he wanted to be an engineer for Starfleet. At that, *“Mama turned around in her seat, her eyes wide with excitement. She studied me, sizing up my declaration. When we Siskos made a statement, we learned to be responsible for our words, because words lead to actions, and actions have consequences. It was the first time I remember seeing in Mama’s eyes the acknowledgement that I was becoming an adult. Mama nodded in agreement, I think more with her own thoughts than me. She said, ‘Well alright then, it looks like we have some work to do, Mister Sisko! Looks like we’re going to have an engineer in the family, Joseph!’ My father stared at Mama for a moment, then turned his eyes back to the road. We drove the rest of the way home in silence.’”* One of the first gifts he received after making the grand announcement came in his anticipation. *“I tore off the paper to reveal my new best friend—****Mr. Scott’s Guide to the Fundamentals of Starships and Engineering****. As I thumbed through the book, it was clear this wasn’t for kids.”* (Mr Scott? Montgomery Scott- “Scotty” from the Enterprise 1701 with Captain James T. Kirk)He was hooked and on his way. There is a lot in this book concerning his life and I was pleased to read it. These authors who have written them sustain the “life” of the characters we loved on screen. But of course, this is only for those who are lovers of all things Star Trek!
7. **FORGOTTEN RUIN**, by Jason Anspach and Nick Cole (2021). This may be a new writing duo that I keep reading. In writing this book they had 3 actual Rangers and 1 Green Beret as advisors since this book is most a Special Forces with heavy emphasis on the Army Rangers. “Rangers Lead The Way”! The main character, PFC “Talker” (his Ranger nickname) is a linguist and a make shift Army historian and he tells the story like most histories talking about the men in his Task Force as they jell together in the most unusual assignment known to man. He begins the book this way, *“When I began to dream in Elvish, it was then I knew I could speak it. And it was when the orc horde overran one of the fighting positions along First Platoon’s sector on the east side of the island the Rangers were defending that I knew we weren’t in Kansas anymore.”* Yeah, so far out there that I almost sent it back to Kindle Unlimited ...but I didn’t. Well, here’s the skinny: the Earth is dying. There is a plague that is spreading that is altering the DNA of every person into what is classified as monster…and that term is classified so no one talks about what that looks like. Well, somewhere along the way they found a “stargate” of sorts (yeah that is what I said a Stargate like the one on TV.) and the big wigs think that sending the Task Force ahead a few years they will be on the other side of the plague figuring that it will work itself out like all plagues. Well…since there is no easy day in special forces they find themselves transported or “gated” nearly 10,000 years into the future where the plague has not gone its course and ceased to exist…it in fact changed everything…men and beast. The Rangers find themselves in what is best described as Lord of the Rings meets Dungeon and Dragons. They encounter orcs, goblins, elves, trolls, giants, minotaur’s, satyrs, witches, wizards, vampires, werewolves, ghouls, zombies and various other deep dark things that go bang in the night. When they come through the “stargate” they crash land on an island and the attacks begin almost immediately for they have something that those in charge of this horde of frightful creatures want. It is called the Forge…think big replicator that can make anything from bombs to coffee. I mention coffee because Talker loves it. Along the way an alliance is made with the elves (think Woodland Elves meets the Noldor elves except a lot fewer). And they strike out to get the Forge back. Interesting people and things keep occurring and we get to meet some great characters though for the longest time I wasn’t sure if I could hang in with this one…but by the end of the first book, I was hooked.
8. **COURAGE, COMMITMENT, FAITH: Tales from the Coalition Defense  Force; Terran Diaspora Anthologies  Book 2,**by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa, others (2024). These are a collection of stories helping us to keep up with side stories from the overall **Echos of War series**that includes many spinoffs at the point. These anthologies bring us up to speed on some of our favorite characters in this series but also like the first story in this book brings us to the end of a commitment to an dear friend of Admiral James Henry. *“Frisik replied. He met Henry’s eyes. “And it will be my honor to stand with my brother’s comrades in his name.” “Then we will all sign,” Drash said. For a moment, Henry considered encouraging them to let him take the heat, if the Empire was going to be offended. But he stopped himself from saying so. This is how they want to remember him. And given all he did for us, I’d be wrong not to accept it. He drew his tablet from his pocket and offered it to Frisik. “For Yanik,” he said. “For Yanik,” Frisik echoed.”* The next story is of Watt Jiro, a former CDF Warrant Officer, that has left behind the wars with the Leaguers and joined the Far Survey Corp for a quiet life of service…but there is no easy day and he and his team end up encountering an old enemy in the midst of a quiet survey on an earth-like planet. Next, in this short story array is a story of a futuristic Marshal that has come to acquire a desperado for transport to a hearing for his crimes. And of course, like the last story it does go as planned…or maybe it did…time will tell. Then the last tale at this time takes us to a crew of misfits put together by CIS (Colonial Intelligence Service) for covert work against the League and against piracy that is prevalent in the outer regions especially around Trinidad Station. Of course, the “easy” job of delivering cargo because an all-out fight for the lives of Captain Alves and his crew. His cargo is top-secret and is being shuttled around so that the CDF will have a moll within the League apparatus. But between a bounty- hunter and a self-proclaimed king of pirates on their tale will they be able to deliver their cargo for such an important mission. Daniel Gibbsis one of my favorite authors at this point…so thankful that everything is roughly G with a nod toward PG!
9. **5 THINGS TO PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH,**by Rachel Jones (2017). This book came to me as a reference from **thegoodbook company**…an excellent source for books and other materials for personal devotion and church study. It is quite simple and helpful for those days when you can’t think of what to pray. It quite simply sets up the reader with 5 Things to pray for you church: **Pray that my church would**: remember what we are, grow in maturity, be devoted to one another, hold to the truth, give generously , and make known God’s glory; **Pray that I would:**use my gifts well, persevere when weary, be who my family needs me to be; **Pray for specific people in my church:**leaders, small group, children in church, youth in church, not-yet- Christians, the elderly, and mercy ministries; **Pray for the wider church:**another church near us, our missionaries, churches far away and the unreached. To each of these heading a particular verse is offered up and then a pray is offered for each 5 days of the week. A good tool especially for those trying to get “re-started” in prayer again or someone seeking to add specificity to their prayers.
10. **LESSONS FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL’S PRAYERS: Classic Sermons on Prayer** by Charles Spurgeon (from the Series: **Rich Theology Made Accessible** Published in 2018 by Cross-Points Publishers [www.cross-points.org/](http://www.cross-points.org/) ) Wow, yet another well compiled book by Crossway of excellent sermons by Spurgeon on prayer from Paul’s prayers. The editors purpose is this: *“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."* Spurgeon himself illustrates why we want to pray according to God's priorities by using God’s word: *"A man might try to fill us and fail, but God, who made us, knows every corner and cranny of our nature, and can pour in joy and peace till every portion of our being is flooded, saturated, and overflowed with delight."* This book could be read straight through or devotionally daily or weekly for there are 8 chapters for each sermon dated 1860-1888. These sermon are extremely encouraging…you come away, if you haven’t ever read Spurgeon’s sermons with a sense that you can hear him speak directly to your heart. *“May the Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ in prayer! We long kept him waiting: we need not complain if he makes us tarry his leisure. Still believe; still hope; still wrestle, until the break of day. Pray for the patience of waiting his will, saying, ‘Let him do what seemeth him good.’ Though it be for months, for years, wait on. Christ is glorified by our patience. Depend on it, the best way in which certain of us can extol him is by letting him have his way with us. Even though he plunge me into seven boiling caldrons one after the other, I will say: Let him do what he wills with his own, and I am his own. I am sure that he does not make the furnace one degree too hot. If he means to give his servant ten troubles, let his heavy hand fall even to the tenth, if so he pleases.”*  The sermons are grand all by themselves all but the appendix, containing all of Paul’s prayers, is a gold mine to be sure. I will end with this quote from one of the central sermons in this book, “*God alone knows the heart, and God alone can rule it: for this ruling Paul makes request. ‘Domine dirige nos.’-The Lord direct your hearts.’ Let us borrow his prayer, and turn it to our own personal use.”*
11. **CHRIST CRUCIFIED: The once-for-all sacrifice,**by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680) (1st published in 1684. Copyright and digitalized by Monergism 2021) Many people find Charnock’s work stimulating but I do not. I find him to be extremely academic in nature which seems to be who he is writing to mostly. But I could be biased. Having said that the offering of this book seems to come from a genuine desire for the Church to know these truths like no other that we might know Christ and what He did and why he did what He did on the cross. He links the Old and New Testaments to classically explain how the sacrifice of Jesus fulfills the OT sacrifices and gives answer to the climax of the covenant of grace. *“The sacrifices thus instituted, were of them selves insufficient, and could not expiate sin; they must therefore receive their accomplishment in some other.”* He speaks to how the Passover reveals the difference to open up our understanding of the what and whys of Jesus’ sacrifice and death. He also makes it abundantly clear that Jesus was a willing participant and how this had been decided in council with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit before time. *“His soul was not wrung and torn from him, but he rendered his spirit into the hands of his Father, and cried with a loud voice before that last act; so that he died not by a defect of strength, but by an ardency of will. He was more delighted with his sufferings for us, than we can be with the greatest worldly pleasures and grandeur, and valued reproaches for us above the empire of the world.”* It has been said, that the Puritans were brought up on the Bible; for a Puritan mind a clear text of the Bible settled all controversies. It is this discipline and clear sightedness which makes this work and many like it so valuable to the strengthening of our doctrines on Christ Crucified. His handling of God’s mercy was both academic in scope but occasionally you would find gems like this:  *“Both Justice and Mercy join hands to help the fallen creature up. God is just in being merciful, and merciful in being just; so that we well may cry aloud with the psalmist, ‘Gracious is the Lord, and righteous,’ Psalm cxvi. 5. Justice struck the sacrifice, that the streams of mercy might have a fuller scope. His justice was not actually appeased till the death of Christ. As a merciful God, he pitied us; but as a holy God, he could not but hate our transgression; as a God of truth, he could not but fulfil his own threatening; as a God of justice, he must avenge himself for the offence against him. He gave Christ as a God of mercy, and required satisfaction as a God of justice ‘He set him forth as a propitiation, that he might be just,’ Rom. iii. 25, 26. His mercy rendered him placable, but his righteousness hindered the actual forgiveness.”* This book is comprised of 4 separate discourses wrapped around 3 particular verses **I Corinthians 2:2, 5:7and Ephesians 5:2.**A last take away that will be a quote I hope to remember, *“Christ was real in His sacrifice; God was real in the* *acceptation of it; we must be real in believing it.”*
12. **THE MORTIFIED Christian: A Treatise on Mortification,**by Christopher Love (1618-1651), a Welsh Presbyterian preacher who was executed, read martyred because he was a non-conformist Presbyterian and he was part of a plot to restore Charles II to the throne. On August 23, 1651 Christopher Love was executed for treason on Tower Hill in London. His execution was attended by Simeon Ashe and Edmund Calamy. On August 25th, Love was privately buried at St Lawrence Church. His funeral sermon was preached by Thomas Manton. His death was a reaction to keep the Presbyterian from gaining too much power in their efforts to supplant the Stuart court. The Puritans very much saw Love as a hero for the cause of Christ. In his short like (33 years) he gave many sermons and wrote many treatises like the one above which was edited and published by his friends listed above in 1654. (Republished digitally by Monergism Books, 2023) All of the are written with an understanding of his audience the regular church goer and he was known as a loving pastor. These sermons concern mortification, in which Love’s judgment is more to be valued because his heart and his experience were a seal to his doctrine. These sermons were taken by faithful note takers while the sermons were given. They are fresh and vibrant, filled with good counsel against the natures of men, of the corruption of men, which still lingers within the heart of the Christian even though he be converted. But now, how does the Christian deal with remaining sin? What does it mean to mortify the sins of the flesh? *“Mortification: It is a holy disposition in a regenerate man derived from the efficacy and virtue of Christ’s death whereby the strength of sin is weakened and the dominion of it destroyed, being utterly disabled from having a commanding power or rule over man anymore.* *Whereas mortifying grace wrought in us by the Spirit of God, reacteth so far as to a seizure upon inward sins as well as outward, as in Col. 3.5. says the Apostle, Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, &c. not only fornication in the act, but uncleanness in the thoughts, concupiscence, and inordinate affections. Mortification by the Spirit, reacheth to the crucifying of the inward man, and therefore examine yourselves in this particular.”* How should a Christian arm himself against his own flesh? What should he look for? How may he know he is actually about the process of mortification? Christopher Love demonstrates the duty of the believer in a series of chapters on this topic. He covers such aspects as the *Necessity of Mortification*, *The Mistakes of Those who do not Recognize their Mortification*, *The Ground and Mistakes of Deluded Men* who may think they have mortified their flesh, and more. I especially enjoyed the aspects Love brought out concerning the “conscience” and how he dealt with the habitual, or as he called it “the bosom”, sin of the Christian. *“That sin which of all others most insinuateth itself into your heart when you are in the service of God and performing holy duties, that sin which can be so impudent as to intrude upon your heart when you are in the presence of God – that is your unmortified sin.”* He explains what this is, how to recognize it, and how to mortify it. He is very clear and straight forward holding no punches when he shows us that those sins which we are most likely to commit, those habitual sins, are those which we love to commit. This is difficult to hear, but very true. Those sins we delight in are the most deadly of sins since they hinder the sanctification we should be about. He speaks to this culture today so well and I have appreciated everything I have ever read by him.
13. **THAT FIRST SEASON: How Vince Lombardi Took the Worst Team in the NFL and Set It on the Path to Glory**, by John Eisenberg*.*This review is pretty simple on one hand…the title says it all. Coach Lombardi comes in never having been a head coach in the NFL and turns the Green Bay Packers into a powerhouse and a household word! He came in and from the very beginning it was obvious that things would never be the same again.  He pushed them to their breaking point to get the most out of them…He wanted it all, because he knew they each had it to give. One of my favorite quotes is this one, *“Gentlemen, he said, we’re going to relentlessly chase perfection, knowing full well we will not catch it, because perfection is unattainable. Bu we are going to relentlessly chase it because, in the process, we will catch excellence.”*The players complained but they kept pushing themselves toward perfection and reaching excellence as they went on to win 6 NFL titles in the 60’s and the first 2 Super Bowls.  Green Bay is called TitleTown because they have a total of 13 titles all told. The players themselves would reflect years later on how Lombardi was something special. *“Fuzzy Thurston, then a seventy-five-year-old Wisconsin legend, recalled the good feelings that swept through the Packer locker room toward the end of the 1959 season. ‘We realized that we were going to be good,’ he said. ‘We knew what was about to happen. Maybe we didn’t know that we would win as much as we did for as long as we did, but we knew we were going to be a very good team. Lombardi just wasn’t going to stand for anything less. We didn’t like him as a person. Damn, he was impossible. But we loved him as a coach. We hated the way he treated us, but we were glad we had him. He was going to make us special.’”*And then Hall of Famer Jerry Kramer said,*“He just kept pushing us,’ Jerry Kramer recalled. ‘I was having a good time, making All-Pro, winning titles, taking care of business, but I wasn’t working as hard as I could. And he just wouldn’t relent. One day in practice I jumped offside, and he got his nose about eight inches from mine and said, ‘Mista, the average college student can concentrate for five minutes, a high school student can last for three minutes, a child in kindergarten can go thirty seconds, and you don’t even have that, so where does that leave you?’ He just wouldn’t let me go, refused to let me slide. And he was that way with all of us. If you weren’t using any part of your talent, he wanted it. He wanted everything. It drove you crazy, and there were a lot of hurts and a lot of pain, but it was all worth it.’”*What a wonderful read about **The First Season**of Lombardi’s tenure for my beloved team the Green Bay Packers.
14. **FALLEN EARTH (First Colony Series Book 15),**by Ken Lozito (2023). After returning to Earth they have found a mess. Individual governments seeking to outdo the other with no centralized objective that would give some stability to the people as a whole. And then there are the Vemus Hybrids to deal with and the mistrust that comes with prejudice is infecting at the highest levels even in the CDF. Many are calling for some type of cure which could lead to forced vaccines to “cure” people whether they want it or not. But Gen. Connor Gates’ daughter, Lauren,  who is spearheading the research, is simply wanting to make it available for those who cannot adapt to the symbiotic condition. Which side is going to win out on this? Ethan, Gen. Gates’ son was Vemus infected to save his life but he prejudice within the CDF seems to be  stonewalling his career and getting back to his beloved 7th Flight wing looks more and more doubtful. But he is still in the CDF and the powers that be send him on another mission which seems destined to ruin his career for good when they find Vemus and Ethan’s hybrid nature is made clear as he saves his squad but they still didn’t trust him. Prejudice always runs deep. Taking some time off after the CDF order more medical evaluations he branches out with Cyd and others in search of what appears to be feral hybrid Vemus causing havoc in some remote areas. They are looking for the origins of the Vemus on earth. Did they find it the after nearly getting killed…first by a misguided CDF Lt. and then by hybrid Vemus themselves? At the same time someone has framed Lauren for murder and after Gen. Gates thinks about devastating the whole judicial system with CDF troops a trial that will determine unity or division among the people of earth begins with Lauren in the middle of it all. What will happen…with the find the Vemus’ origins?  Will Laurenbe convicted of these false claims? This book is filled with non-stop action from beginning to end…my one is that the next one is not ready to be read yet!
15. **WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE,**Monergism Copyright © 2024. Why do we need another book on this subject with so many in existence throughout the generations? Well the editors at Monergism had been dialoguing with fellow Christians who hold differing views on several key doctrines, namely the doctrines of grace, and it became evident that with the large amount of misunderstanding that they found they were compelled to anchor these doctrines in Scripture so as to make clear the truthfulness of these disputed doctrines even among sincere Christians. So the bulk of this book is a categorized list of scriptural references for each part of the doctrines of grace with the intent to highlight the undeniable fact that these are doctrines of God rooted in His Word and then to organize these truths for easy reference. Considering the Scripture enables us to see sequentially and fully how the bible confirms these truths. It is almost a workable outline that could be used to teach these doctrines with a clear foundation in the scriptures and obviously not opinion. Also, near the end the editors have added a brief appendix that provides and clear and succinct commentary on each of the 5 doctrines of grace.  All of this is to deepen our knowledge and assurance of the veracity of these truths so they can be easily taught with the hope that they will take in the hearers and in this case the readers. In the appendix there is also an interesting discussion on what about the 4 Point Calvinist and how a 4 pointer creates disharmony in the Trinity. *“The classical understanding of the Trinity is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work in perfect unity and harmony, not with divergent intentions or purposes. What about 4-point Calvinists? The stance of 4-point Calvinists, who accept all points of Calvinism except Limited Atonement, raises an intriguing theological discussion, especially when juxtaposed with the affirmation of Irresistible Grace. This situation indeed suggests a nuanced, if not implicit, acceptance of Limited Atonement, often not recognized.”*Another part of this appendix which is extremely helpful is their discussion on John 3:16.  Thought they leave out a text discussion on vs. 13-15 the rest of what they say is right on and easily understood. Lastly the short synopsis’ of each doctrine is also very helpful and I will leave you with this one, *“In conclusion, the Perseverance of the Saints is a testament to the faithfulness of God in preserving His people. It offers a blend of divine assurance and a call to diligent faith, encouraging believers to cling to the promises of God, abide in Christ, and be vigilant in faith and holiness. As we navigate the journey of faith, let the truth of God’s preserving grace be the wind in our sails and the anchor of our souls, empowering us to persevere until we see Christ face to face.”*
16. **LIGHT THE FIRE AGAIN: Eighteenth-Century Light for the Twenty-First-Century Darkness**, by James P. Williams (2021 WestBow Press). The author was able to secure a letter written by a mostly unknown mover and shaker during the Great Awakening and sought to make it known to the world. *“What makes evangelist William Robinson’s letter of 1741 significant is that it hits the trifecta of historical documents. You have very important persons, George Whitfield and William Robinson. They are describing significant events, the Great Awakening’s firepower. It occurs during extraordinary times: a smallpox epidemic and the terrible snows of 1720–1722. Even during these times of extremely severe weather, they didn’t fail to detour the Most High God. Jonathan Edwards has been credited by some as having started the uniting of the revivals in the colonies, prior to the Great Awakening, to his own congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, and on July 8, 1741, in Enfield, Connecticut, he said, “Sinners in the hand of an angry God.”* William Robison who came to the preaching business a bit later in life, who would get smallpox and be blinded in one eye but God would use him mightily along with the Tennets and many others to spread the gospel among the colonies. *“The biography of an eighteenth-century spiritual light in no way makes a pretense of being an exhaustive chronological account of the American colonies’ Great Awakening. It is, rather, a very narrow focus on one of the unknown Great Awakening’s key associate itinerant evangelists, William Robinson. This biography is a thrilling unveiling of brand-new and long-lost excerpts of a letter from William Robinson written to a cousin in England.”*His telling the story…what there is of it…is good and helpful from a historical perspective but when he branches off into application for the 21st Century he shows himself not as aware of this century as he is of the 18th. But I do like this ending quote and how appropriate it is for us today, *“An old American evangelist once wondered aloud, ‘How can there be a deep revival in a shallow generation?’ The men and women in this book have something to teach us about that—and it is clear that their answer involved neither condescension to shallowness nor imitation of it. For them, mature Christian spirituality can only grow from a mature Christian mind, and such a mind can only come to be when it has first hid itself in the mind of Christ.”*
17. **LATENT PROWESS: Order of the Scion book 1,**by Toby Neighbors (2024).  Our heroes’ name is Mitch Murphy! What a great name…how many war movies have a “Murph” in it as the likeable and usually expendable character? Well, none so likeable is this Murphy who is part of the Colonial Marine Corps and he is very special and not the least expendable. But I am gettting ahead of myself. Mitch Murphy was just a less than normal “Joe” with a less than common life in real estate…with an even worse marriage…all things crumbling around him. He has found himself in massive debt, in a nowhere job, with a wife who is cheating on him (no pictures…mental or word… of anything other than the fact of the indiscretion).  Many had told him early in life that he had potential but he never sought to achieve that potential…until now. He has noticed the posters many times on his commute to and from work but he had also heard the stories…the horror stories. All he had to do was agree to receive a newly discovered formula for unlocking untapped abilities and sign up for the CMC leaving Earth behind forever. At the end of his rope, literally, and receiving the ability to pay off all his debts he signs up and begins a wild ride no one even the scientists expected. He comes out with so many “super-abilities” (think Captain America on steroids) that he is immediately made an officer…something never done before. He is taken to New Terra, the only colonized world outside of the Sol system and put in charge of veteran super soldiers to prove his mettle against an unrelenting enemy that no one saw coming. There are many other species “watching” the humans…but one in particular is always on the lookout for exceptional beings from every “race of aliens” to become part of their Scion Order. This is the first in this series, Toby’s 100th book, and it is set to be another best seller in the military sci-fi genre. I can’t wait to see what happens next.
18. **LIFE OF FAITH**, by Richard Sibbes (originally given and printed 1637-Monergism digitalized 2023). This is one of those books which have been put together to talk specifically about the life of Faith a 3 sermon series given in 1637 for a congregation that was struggling with how to live a life of faith in the dark times of the 17th century England from **Galatians 2:20-*“And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.****"*He is such an easy read even in this non-modernized version.With a wonderful blend of theological insight and pastoral wisdom, Sibbes examines the believer's union with the crucified Christ and experience of a life defined by His indwelling presence.In the first sermon/chapter, Sibbes explores the profound reality of being crucified with Christ. He articulates the concept of dying to self, highlighting the transformative nature of this spiritual crucifixion. Sibbes encourages readers to embrace the freedom that comes from relinquishing their old selves and embracing the life of faith, rooted in Christ's sacrificial work on the cross*.*The second sermon/chapter of the book considers the practical application of living by faith. Sibbes navigates the reader through the complexities of sanctification, highlighting the tension between human frailty and divine grace. He illustrates how the life of faith empowers believers to overcome the challenges of sin and temptation, relying on Christ's strength rather than their own efforts.And in the last sermon/chapter, he says that the Christian life is a communion of the believer's life with that of Christ. Sibbes explores the significance of Christ's love and His indwelling presence, asserting that this reality transforms the believer's desires and motivations. He says, *“No man can live a holy life by faith, but first he must know that God loves him and Christ loves him. Holy actions spring from love, and are directed by love to the right end, which only love moveth us to intend. 'The love of Christ,' saith Paul, 'constrains me, a holy violence moves me, who was a persecutor and a blasphemer,' 2 Cor. 5:14. So the sense of the love of Christ in pardoning of sins will constrain one to a holy violence in the performing of all duties. Why, if any base ends come into a man's mind, in that, is a Christian to regard himself, to seek his own ease, honour, pleasure? No; this consideration, if he have any assurance of the pardon of his sins, will move him to the contrary. Christ died for me; shall I not live to Christ, live to him that gave himself for me?”*His pastoral encouragement is timeless another reason why his works continue to speak to the Church generations later.
19. **THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS,** by William Bates, (1696, Monergism Copyright © 2020).  ***“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*” – PSALM 130:4**Bates exposits this passage with a brief introduction saying, *“THE Psalmist, in the first and second verses, addresses God with earnest desires for his saving mercies:****‘Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord: Lord hear my voice: let thine ear be attentive to my supplication.’****He humbly deprecates the severe inquiry of divine justice; ver. 3.****"If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?"****If God should with an exact eye observe our sins, and call us to an account, who can stand in judgment? who can endure that fiery trial? The best saints, though never so innocent and unblamable in the sight of men, though never so vigilant and watchful over their hearts and ways, are not exempted from the spots of human frailty, which according to the rigour of the law, would expose them to a condemning sentence. He relieves and supports himself under this fearful apprehension with the hopes of mercy:****‘but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.’****It is in thy power and thy will, to pardon repenting and returning sinners,****‘that thou mayest be feared.’***This treatise is built on two propositions that he will seek to prove: First, that forgiveness resides in God alone. And second, that the forgiving mercy of God is a powerful motive of adoration and obedience and fellowship as we forgive others by God’s command. There so many great quotes in this book, like, *“What is contained in forgiveness. This necessarily supposes sin, and sin a law that is violated by it: the law implies a sovereign Lawgiver, to whose declared will subjection is due, and who will exact an account in judgment of men's obedience or disobedience to his law, and dispense rewards and punishments accordingly. It is the high and peculiar prerogative of God to pardon sin. His authority made the law, and gives life and vigour to it, therefore he can remit the punishment of the offender…He forgives our sins as entirely as if they had never been committed, and is reconciled as if he had never been offended…The confession of our sins is indispensably requisite to qualify us for pardon. The promise is express and full,****"He that confesses and forsakes sin, shall find mercy." Prov. 28:13****. That we may not be deceived in the application of this promise, I will briefly consider what is preparatory to this duty, the properties of it, and the connection of pardon with it”*His going on and on about this is to encourage the Christian in their times of doubting and to aid them to encourage others in their true assurance of faith because of God’s eternal forgiveness for His own. Concerning forgiving others this stood out to me as something we all need to take to heart, *“Our pardoning the offences of others is an evangelical condition of our obtaining pardon: we are commanded, "When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11:25, 26. The command is peremptory and universal, frequently and severely urged upon us by our Saviour.”*One last quote among so many,*“Love to the benefactor, and joy in the benefit, are the incentives of thankfulness. They tune the heart and tongue in the music of praise.”*No one talks like that anymore!
20. **BATTLE ORDERS: Never Surrender Series Book 1**, by Toby Neighbors (2022). Another Military sci-fi series that bodes well with good character development and hardly any cussing and nothing else but hard action and loyalty beyond measure. This book also is heavy on marital commitment and protection of home. Of, course, many of these character traits would be expected from a committed battle Marine. Moss Lefer is among a group of battle veterans that get stuck with a less than capable Captain who sends them into harm’s way while he stays back…all of Moss’ squad is wiped out even his old crusty Master Sergeant. His captain is wounded and even though the man is a waste as a leader it is still Moss’ job to get him to safety and help from his wounds. The battle for Elon Station is going badly with an unrelenting enemy, the Sartans, seemingly in control and about to seize control of the whole planet. But Moss, of course, wants to live to serve out his enlistment get married to his Navy doctor girlfriend Hali, but it isn’t looking too good for those possibilities. But he doesn’t give up. While carrying His captain he finds a way to turn the battle and in dramatic fashion is able to fulfill his desires. Once married Moss and Hali find a goldilocks planet and begin to settle in but trouble has a tendency to always be around the corner so from defending his home and family to help defend the planet the action is somewhat continuous and engaging. Toby’s writing never ceases to draw one in…now on to the next book in this series **BASE OF FIRE.**
21. **LOMBARDI’S MEN: a Biography of Every Green Bay Packer from 1959-1967 and Their Lives After Football**, by Stanton Greene (2022 version with 21 extra pages and updates). This was an interesting read to be sure. It tells the story of many of the players that I grew up watching in the 60’s but also their interaction with other players on other teams.  As the NFL and the AFL came to life and then eventually came together…the back story of this is interesting seen through the eyes of this author and the many different players he highlights. But, I digress...for this is a book that also highlights a very special time and very special people that perhaps have not been duplicated since. I know I am biased toward the Packers, but Lombardi and his men had something special…so much so that it, at least, has not been duplicated in the Packers again for such a long period as the Lombardi years. There have been moments of brilliance but nothing so sustained as what was seen in the 9 years Lombardi was at the helm. It has been said by many sports historians that these players were merely the supporting cast of the real star…Lombardi…but as the Coach has said himself…these guys and their desire to win was the real star. Oh, Lombardi was the one who convinced them of their “greatness” but they are the ones who won and lost the games winning 5 championships during this time 2 of those being the first 2 Super Bowls. And they also kept on winning after they left Green Bay proving that they did have the right stuff in or outside of Lombardi’s oversight. These 108 men, in this book, who played for Lombardi each contributed to the success that build the legend of St. Vincent and the legend of the Green Bay Packers.
22. **AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN,**by Thomas Boston EDITED BY THE REV. SAMUEL M'MILLAN ABERDEEN: GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET 1828. (Monergism digital Copyright © 2024). The good reverend wrote these 7 sermon around the text, Mark 10:21-22- *“And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”*Much like the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13 we know there are those who seek to attain to heaven by works…who genuinely believe that they have done enough.  They exist alongside the faithful mimicking them but never actually being them. Rev. Boston wants to expositorily reveal the fact that these people do in fact eist…give them the basic tools and understanding to see if this applies so that they may turn from their ways …which implies that even some of these are really just immature Christians for without a changed heart nothing he says will even get them to see their folly…much like the rich young ruler of these texts. He also goes so far as to mostly imply that those who are wealthy will not get into the kingdom of God in fact the entrance is sdo narrow that only a few will make it in at all.*“The heart also is carried away from God, when men trust in the world more than in God. "Soul, says the rich man, thou hast goods laid up for many years, take thine ease," (Luke 12:19 but then there is also  Mark 10:23, 24). From this we may see, that it is hard to have the world and not to trust in it.* *There is great need of grace to lift up the hearts of men who have full houses, to look to God for their daily bread. It is hard to have the world, and not to be secure because we have it: and we are ready to make gold our confidence.”* He goes on to make the point that no matter how good they look there is something that keeps them just outside of the faith, *“The most refined hypocrisy leaves still one thing that is lacking, one lust, one idol with which the heart cannot part; some lust from which the hypocrite was never weaned and which was never made bitter enough to him.”*But there may be hope for some to live differently, *“We must do all this, believing the promises suited to that case. The word of promise is excellent armour for victory over sin. The promise assures us of victory and so strengthens the battle. It brings in the bosom of it, ‘They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, Is. 40. It puts God's faithfulness and the believer's victory in one bottom, so that if any fail, both fail together. God has made the promise, Micah 7:19. He will subdue our iniquities, and it is our duty to put him in remembrance of it. Say not the promises belong to you, if you be not willing to part with all sin and take Christ.”*A hard book to read for it almost lack of hope for these folks, but a worthy one, indeed.
23. **THE GREAT DUTY OF RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE WILL IN AFFLICTION,** by William Bates,  (1st published 1684) Monergism  Copyright © 2020. This was definitely an interesting book. Resignation of ones will or just plain ol’ submission is not something talked about these days. His book is full of wonderful truths and advice for believers who are or will be suffering in affliction. He forms this whole treatise after the example of our Lord in **Matthew 26:39- *“And going a little farther he fell on his face rand prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.’”*** First, he makes it clear God is the author of our affliction. Like a father he afflicts us so that we will grow stronger and stronger in the faith. *“His paternal love in sending afflictions, is a sufficient argument to win our compliance with his will. The blessed apostle applying lenitives (medicine like laxatives)  to the afflicted, propounds two divine truths, that if seriously thought of, and steadfastly believed, are powerful to mitigate the acerbity of all sufferings, and support the spirit in the greatest agony. The first is, "God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth:" Heb. 12:6. and the other that is joined with it is, "Whom the Lord loves, he chasteneth."*But he goers on with things like this, *“Now the more we magnify God, and exalt his authority in our judgments, the more our wills are prepared to yield to him: "His excellency will make us afraid to oppose his providence."*Also,*“The more we debase and vilify ourselves, the more easy it will be to bear what God inflicts; humility disposeth to submission.”*Yet, *“The righteousness of God in all his ways, if duly considered, will compose the afflicted spirit to quiet and humble submission. He is never injurious to us when he deprives us of our sweetest and most precious comforts, because we have incurred the forfeiture of all. He is not cruel in laying the heaviest punishments upon us, for we deserve them. If we were free from actual sins, yet our depraved nature, so repugnant to the pure law of God, involves us under an obligation to punishment. If we had not been attainted with the guilt of original sin, yet the sins committed in the course of our lives, make us deeply obnoxious to divine justice: how much more the concurrent guilt of original and actual sins? The acts of sin are transient and pass away; but the guilt and stain of sin, and the conscience of sin remain, and no less than eternal punishment is commensurate to the obliquity. From hence there is the clearest reason to justify God in all his proceedings.”* His conclusions are equally helpful but for the sake of space I will put one more quote that seems to sum up the whole book. *“The two principal parts of holiness, are ceasing from doing evil, and learning to do well. And afflictions are ordained and sent as profitable for both these effects. It is the perfection of holiness to do what God loves, and to love what God does.”*
24. **FORWARD COMMAND (Galaxy Bridge Book 1)** by Daniel Gibbs, Steve Rzasa (2024). An exciting new series by these two dealing with the “settling” of the Sexton “B” part of space that the Lion of Judah was thrust into and had to fight their way out of. Well, an alliance was formed based on the work of Gen. David Cohen and his character and a massive space station Joint Base Sagittarius Arch was built in honor of the new found relationships (think Star Trek Deep Space Nine with the intrigue, politics and humor). Col. Mateo Larra has been given command and from the very first day so many people are jostling for his favor or to simply try to figure what they might get away with under his command. Col. Larra is a committed Christian but has slipped a bit in his actions toward his faith something his scientist wife Esme continually reminds him of…but like a typical man; he will get to it when things slow down on the station.  But there is nothing typical about this time on the station…there are pirates to deal with and they haven’t even got their battle group here yet. There are station matters concerning fair trade. He is a soldier not a diplomat! Then there is the mysterious ship disappearances and then reappearing as if nothing is wrong yet no bodies can be found, in fact, no sign of a struggle though it is clear that work has been done. And on top of that the League Ambassador is kidnapped. Now how are these things connected?  Or are they? Do they have a new enemy that they have never encountered before or an old one in a new form?  *“Is anyone gonna talk about the really tiny elephant in the room? Dr. Pruitt crossed her arms. Because this all comes down to one salient point: the nanites are back. They are, or at least this offshoot is.”* What does this mean for Sexton “B”? Can they be defeated? This book like all the others of Gibbs are keep you on the edge of your seat great…that is, for sci-fi nuts like me. I am so looking forward to **FORWARD HUNT (GALAXY BRIDGE BOOK 2).**
25. **WAR INC(ACE EVANS SERIES BOOK 1,**by Toby Neighbors (2020). Alex is a teenager on a nowhere mining planet in the backwoods of the galaxy with no hope to get off and better himself…and he didn’t want to say that out loud because he respected his dad who worked these mines to provide for his mom and his sister and Alex (Ace). Coming home from another uneventful day at school with bad grades and equally bad attitude from his teachers the planet comes under attack and when he see a Defender Mech go down and its operator gets hurt he springs in to action with instincts he didn’t know he had. After safely pulling the operator to safety he jumps in the Mech without the necessary neural interface (INC) and yet still blows away the battle bots who were wreaking havoc on his planet…something he wasn’t supposed to do.  Well, that begins a story and a life that he could have only imagined especially after meeting the VP of security for the Ahzco’s corporation that own this planet. So after that meeting his life and the life of his family will never be the same again. Ace is then fast tracked much to some chagrin and others delight causing all kinds of typical relational headaches. But in the CDF (Corporate Defense Force) is where Ace feels like he fits. But there is s much subterfuge that Alex id uncertain who to trust until he has to make a choice.  Will he make the right one? Will his choice be beneficial for all involved? Is he a prodigy  with the Mechs as everyone says or is he extremely lucky. This is a great coming of age story that begs you to keep reading long after your eyes are telling you otherwise. Again I like Toby because there is limited foul language and a story line that nudges at your imagination.
26. **BASE OF FIRE: Never Surrender Series Book 2,**by Toby Neighbors (2022). As Moss and his little group clean up the first Sartan attack he seeks to get the city to plan for the next attack that many of his retractor with the government don’t believe will happen. But, just in case, not because Moss has recommended it they begin looking at weaponry that could defend their world.  Many of them are scrambling for power hence leaving the city un-protected and the planet by virtue of their sentiment rubbing off on the other cities on planet. Moss doesn’t want any part of it so he resigns his commission and head on vacation with his family and that is when THEY return…dozens of pods…hundreds of Sartan soldiers bent on one thing …mass destruction of all humans. Well, of course, the Marine in Moss kicks in and he begins killing Sartans and after making his way inside one of the pods his discovery could change the course of this incursion devastating the home he has come to love. But, of course, those who suppose him to be a rival won’t listen, so Moss and some of his friends take things into their own hands to seek to save the city. There is so much action with this one that the reader hardly gets a breather…just like Moss. The end comes but who is left standing among his rivals and the people of Lexton and Avalon…among his family and friends? Another great action packed book.  Looking forward to the last in this series… **HARD SITE: Never Surrender Series Book 3.**
27. **THE RADICAL DISCIPLE: Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling** by John Stott (2012). I read this the first time the year after his death. John Stott and English Anglican (Reformed and biblical) priest was one of 20th and 21st century theologians that I could relate to along with R.C. Sproul and J.I. Packer. These men set a particular pace for truly biblical theologians that is being emulated today by men like Joel Beeke, Sinclair Ferguson and James White. To be a disciple of Christ is to be radical and Dr. Stott in his last book wanted to leave the Church today with 8 characteristics of Christian discipleship which have often been neglected and yet deserve to be taken seriously, from his experience. The 8 characteristics are these: Non- conformity, Christlikeness, Maturity, Creation –care, Simplicity, Balance, Dependence and Death. On non-conformity he says, *“The first characteristic of the radical disciple which I bring before you I will call ‘non-conformity’. Let me explain why. The church has a double responsibility in relation to the world around us. On the one hand we are to live, serve and witness in the world. On the other hand we are to avoid becoming contaminated by the world. So we are neither to seek to preserve our holiness by escaping from the world nor to sacrifice our holiness by conforming to the world. Escapism and conformism are thus both forbidden to us.”*On Christlikeness, he says, *“Christlikeness and the indwelling of the Spirit I have spoken much about Christlikeness, but how is it possible for us? In our own strength, it is clearly not, but God has given us his Holy Spirit to enable us to fulfil his purpose. William Temple used to illustrate the point from Shakespeare in this way: It is no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear, and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it; I can’t. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it; I can’t. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like his. And if the Spirit of Jesus could come and live in me, then I could live a life like his. God’s purpose is to make us like Christ, and God’s way is to fill us with his Holy Spirit.”*Six of the eight contain such helpful theological and practical insights as these. O don’t know if it was his age or the just the lifestyle that he chose to lead through the years…probably a combination of both (for he took simplicity to a monkish level). But His chapters on creation-care and simplicity leave much to be desired almost sounding wokeish before that term even existed. (He finished writing this in 2009.) Bu over all so much here for us NOT to forget. Even with the weakness in two of these chapters it is always worthwhile to read the “last” book or the “last” sermon of such men that God has called to lead his church. So I commend this book as well.
28. **HARD SITE: Never Surrender Series Book 3** by Toby Neighbors (2022). Marine Moss Lefer doesn’t know the meaning of give up? His family has settled on a beautiful planet and have begun to raise their family…and wife Hali is pregnant with child #3.  The Sartans have returned and they have come back with such force that the odds of survival diminish with each new day. But Moss has an overachievers will to win...but not at all cost unless of course, that is family in in danger and you have to pity the fool…ish Sartans that want his planet. This win at all cost had rubbed off on his pregnant wife as well, *“She remembered asking Moss one time how he managed his fear when he was going into combat. You don’t manage it, he had told her. You make friends with it, embrace it, let it motivate you to do what has to be done. She didn’t know if she could make friends with fear, but she refused to let it keep her from doing what she needed to do for her family. Loren was right about getting prepared. Whether Moss returned or not, she would have to make sure that her children had a chance to survive.”* This is the sentiment of many others on planet as well…and against all odds they finally push the Sartans out killing thousands and destroying their ships. It is a lot more complicated that the general overview I just gave.  And it is a fitting ending to the series **NEVER SURRENDER.**A series worthy of your time if you are a fan of Toby and his space Marine stories. Highly recommend this hero to your reading.