**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.
29. **THE WOMAN’S GLORY,**Samuel Torshell (1604 -1650) (1st published in 1645, Monergism 2024). Rev. Torshell writing in the time that he does gives us an interesting glimpse into the place of women in the 17th Century.  This work is dedicated to the second daughter the ill-fated King Charles I, Elizabeth, who would only live 5 years after this was published. But what he has to say here takes us back to the 1st Century and the “glory” unto which Jesus showed believing women in contrast to a culture that sought to enslave them in various ways. So this book is an interesting historical reflection as well as a deeply doctrinal book on the “glory” or dignity of women, especially believing women, and the accomplishments they should strive towards. He builds this treatise to the princess around a letter between a well-known woman Reformer and a Reformed professor of the day as an example to Elizabeth as she grows in stature and faith, Anna Maria Schurman, *“The Letters touching this argument between Andreas Rivet, and Anna Maria à Schurman. For the confirmation of the point in hand, and for the honor of that Maiden Pen, I will translate into our own tongue for the use of our English women, so much of that learned Letter as concerns this present argument, which that renowned Virgin, Anne Marie Schurman of Utrecht wrote in Latin, to the Reverend and famous French Divine, Andrew Rivet, then at Leyden, which Doctor Beverwick a learned Physician of Dort hath communicated together with a Dissertation upon the same subject by the same Lady.” Andre’ Rivet was a French Huguenot Theologian (Reformed/Calvinistic professor at the University of Utrect)*The letters he is translating for his “charge” 10 year old Princess Elizabeth, Charles I second daughter…were from Anna Maria van Schurman of Utrecht describing the kind of life in learning from a biblical perspective a woman could actually achieve. Anna Maria had been a child prodigy and Rev. Torshell is seeking to compare Elizabeth’s to Anna Maria who spoke 14 languages  wrote in 10 and she was the first woman to attend University in the Netherlands a staunch Reformer of the church. Rev. Torshell sought to make it plain to his charge that with diligence and commitment she could be an influence in her generation as well. Sadly, as was the case in those days she didn’t live to see the desires of Rev. Torshell lived out. (they both died the same year, 1650) One other interesting fact, the reason that she was this Reformed preachers charge is because that the whole family was essentially under house arrest by the British parliament during the English Civil War with Parliament demanded that Charles’ children be brought up Protestant. An interesting read for girls of the day and even ours. *“Let Ladies and great women; yea, all women have it in their thoughts, that they were made after the Image of God, which is truth. It will not become those smooth foreheads, to have rough, and shadowy, and clouded intentions. What saith St Paul? Lye not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the Image of him that created him.”*
30. **MERCIES MEMORIAL, or Israel’s thankful rememberance of God in their high estate, for His mercifull remembering of them in their low estatebased on Psalm 107:8- *“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men.”and Psa. 136:23- “Who remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endurath forever.”***, by Ralph Venning(1621-1674) (1stprinted 1657, Monergism 2024). This was a lengthy sermon given before his congregation and the Lord Mayor of London along with many other dignitaries of the day. Even as a Puritan preacher (non-conformist) he was highly sought after for his preaching though he is someone most of us today have never heard of. He unfolds the theme of God’s divine mercy upon those who do not deserve it…if it was deserved it wouldn’t be mercy. He does this by exploring the manifestation of God’s mercy in the many faithful throughout history.  He draws from a wide variety of biblical examples…OT patriarchs to the experiences of the nation of Israel and even upon the trials and deliverances of early Christians. He does this to clearly and boldly illustrate how God’s merciful remembrance (memorial) of His people in our “low estate” has been a consistent thread throughout the fabric of God’s redemptive plan…His covenant of grace. *“Now then, you see what it is for God to remember a people in their low estate; it is to think upon them, in opposition to forgetfulness; it is to take notice of them, in opposition to neglect; it is to lay their case and estate to heart, to pity and compassionate them, and to be well pleased with them, to hear and to grant their requests, to help and succor, to redeem and deliver them from the hand of their enemies.”*One of this long sermons most memorable aspects is when he is talking to us about gratitude and thanksgiving framed as amoral and spiritual obligation for any and all who have experienced God’s grace. This is a sermon worth reading as a sermon but also as a spiritual guide for doing just that …cultivating a heart of gratitude and a life where mercy is seen clearly. *“His mercy is over all His works; He is good and does good to all, but there is a specialty to the household of faith. And God, who commands us to do good to all, especially to the household of faith, does but command us that which He patterns us.”*
31. **GRAVITY MASTERS: Order of the Scion book 2,**by Toby Neighbors (2024).  This one is just okay. I mean there is some good adventure in it and some conflict resolution with some interesting twist and turns…BUT…Mitch has become a Jedi with the Order and they are for the preservation of good defined by the creator…so a sort of Christianish Jedi order. It all gets a bit weird when in this book Mitch is taught how to control gravity to do everything from stop bullets to crushing and reforming planets. Mitch has ascended to the latter yet but he is a good fighter with his special saber (not a light saber…but just as tough and able to slice though anything). He is able to leap talk building with a single thought and he is able to control a space ship in space traveling beyond the speed of light. Mitch and his guides from the Order of Scion have traveled great distances and met many different types of aliens species…some good most bad…and then there’s the Fray…a “darkside order” of its own. The fray is the Orders enemy…sort of like Satan and Christ. Mitch has gone along and is growing stronger by the day. He has even become a member of the Order himself, the first human to achieve such a high standard. But now his training is taking him back to familiar ground…among his own people…to the planet that he left just before his own people tried to nuke it because it was overrun by Lymies. Will the meeting between Leo Squad and him work out? What will all this mean for the human race? How will things change?  Is it a change Mitch can navigate through? Now we will have to wait until the 3rd book comes out.
32. **CONSCRIPT: Book 1,**by Scott Bartlett (2024). This is a new series by an author who never lets his readers down. This one is about a young man seeking desperately to help his siblings have a better life physically and to help pay off the debt his parents have accrued to the “company store” on the planet Psyche…a faraway mining colony that most people have never heard of. Po Abbato thinks his plan is full proof to steal from the cartels that run the drug trade and black market on his planet. As you would expect everything goes array and he is caught and given a choice 25 years in a digital prison while your body rots away from no movement physically or join the Marines. Of course, the training sequences go on for chapters but the intrigue and the action internally and externally is quality writing. And then there is an invisible alien (who doesn’t like invisible alien friends, right?) that only Po can see that is helping him stay alive and get through basic. Just as everything seems to be moving in a direction that is positive the Marine training camp in dep space is attacked by an enemy that they have been at war with on and off through the years. Well, this leads Po and the other newly “minted” Marines to fight this war not fully trained. This is on the job training at the worse. Again, Scott places Christianity front and center through a priest that takes an interest in the uninterested Po to seek to bring him into the light so that life can make sense from the perspective of the only one that matters.  So again well worth reading.  And I look forward to the next instalment **RIFLEMAN** due out in April.
33. **CARTHAGE PRIME: (ACE EVANS SERIES BOOK 2),**by Toby Neighbors (2020). This one is so good that I was even reading the chapters for the next book that he tacks on as a tease to get you to want the next one, because I like these characters sooo much. Alex (Ace) Evans has come a long way since getting taken off his unnamed planet literally in the middle of nowhere in the galaxy. He has gone from recruit to a mech operator and pilot with the elite Titan Mechs and team leader on top of that. Of course, it doesn’t hurt that he keeps saving the VP of Security.  So they are called up to protect the peace on Carthage prime a new planet claimed by a couple of corporations… but it all starts off slow…because this is simply a over watch mission for the other Mechs…not the elite Titan Squad…to make sure no other corporations seek to infringe on their part of the planet. Waiting is the hardest part for a soldier and often it seems that waiting is what takes up a big part of their lives…until it doesn’t. But then they don’t have to wait long. A rival Corp. Zen Tech comes in with guns blazing and all of a sudden life is a nonstop strategic battle to win the ground game.  I will take everything Alex and Nyx have to maneuver his team into position to save the planet but then there is the battle is space what will Alex do with that especially when a corporate shuttle finds its way into the fray of battle with all communications down. Something amazing happens to Alex…not unlike the first time he handled a Mech without an INC devise in his head. What will happen and will Alex be able to control what happens next with Ahzco and with his feelings for Nyx?
34. **PREPARATIONS FOR SUFFERINGS: or the Best Work in the Worst times: Wherein the Necessity, Excellency and Means of Our Readiness for Sufferings are Evinced and Prescribed; Our Call to Suffering Cleared and the Great Unreadiness of Many Professors Bewailed,**by John Flavel (1628-1691). Reading this again it has encouraged me to be less concerned about this suffering and more concerned with what God is doing in my life and the life of the rest of us as we suffer to Hs glory. In his own words he tells us why such a treatise is important, *“Humiliation for our own sins and the due preparation to take up our own cross and follow Christ in a suffering path is the only mark and aim of this tract. The expectation of and preparation for suffering abates much of the dread and terror by accustoming our thoughts beforehand to it, that we may find it not so grievous, shocking, and intolerable when it comes. Reader, the cup of suffering is a very bitter cup, and it is but needful that we provide something to sweeten it so that we may be able to receive it with thanksgiving. Beloved, suffering is one of the choicest discoveries of your love to your master Christ—yea, it is such a testimony of love to Him as angels are not capable of. They show their love by their readiness to do His will in the execution of which they fly as with wings (Ezekiel 1:24) but you only have the happiness of testifying your love for Him by your readiness to suffer for Him. Is not this excellent? The shoe of preparation to follow Him through thorns and briers, and over rocks and mountains of difficulties and troubles, loves Him indeed.”*His works, especially this one needs to be read in this day and age as a reminder that first, we are not the only ones who suffer, second, our suffering is nothing compared to the actual suffering of those who are being persecuted, oppressed and killed for their faith, third, we should learn to give thanks in all circumstances, especially suffering because it one of the ways that God uses to keep us focused on Him and growing in the faith as individuals and as a church. And fourth, it is a sign of God’s grace as we work through the suffering in this life*. “Hence in like manner hath the soul as great an advantage for sufferings; for this new creature (grace) having such a natural tendency to God, will enable the soul in which it is, to break its way to God through all the interposing obstacles and discouragements. What are persecutions, what are reproaches, what are the fears and frowns of enemies, but so many blocks thrown into the soul's way to keep it from God and duty? And indeed where this principle of grace is wanting, they prove inaccessible mountains. Graceless hearts are stalled, and quite discouraged by them: but now this tendency of the soul to God enables the Christian to break his way through all. This is grace, and this is your advantage by it in the most difficult part of your work. It will carry you through all; make the hardest work easy and pleasant. And if great sufferings or temptations interpose betwixt you and your God, it will break through all, and enable you to withstand all; as it did Paul in the text, who forced his way not only through the fury of enemies, but also through the entreaties and tears of friends.”*This is not a long treatise (150 or so pages) but it is full of biblical insight to aid the Christian in the sufferings of this life giving them purpose…God’s glory!
35. **AGING WITH GRACE: Flourishing in an Anti-aging Culture,**by Sharon Betters and Susan Hunt (2021). I picked this book up again as the WOV have been reading through it this year and last. It is an excellent resource and challenge at any walk of life. From Leslie on this book; *“We’re going to study how to START TODAY to fully LIVE our lives … keeping the goal of LIVING FOR THE LORD in our vision at all times!  And we need to do this as EARLY in our lives as is possible! EVERYWHERE we look, our culture screams at us to  REACH constantly for ways to remain young… to value youthful beauty and spend LOTS of money to keep it… to be fearful of losing any of it…to make this a serious priority…Scripture shows us another way…to KEEP our eyes on the Lord and live TODAY in honor to Him with Biblical thinking and growing in Grace.*Another excellent book from two women who are ahead of me in the race yet have often taken the time to stop and pay attention to me and my family in service and support. Both of these women know what it is to be stretched by God’s severe providence and both have still come forth shining with the light of their Savior. These women are filled with the Spirit and with His wisdom that they “deserve” to be heard by any and all…not just the women to which they are writing. The exposition of Psalm 92 is alone worth the price of the book. And their grace points, called *Growing in Grace*, that run throughout the book are amazingly insightful, like this one, *“Our justification is an act of God’s free grace. The physical and mental decline of aging does not decrease the power of his grace to reverse the effects of the fall and to make us flourish spiritually. God has spoken, and he will do it.”*Or this one, *“As long as we live in this world, we are prone to look down. The rhythm of Sabbath and daily worship recalibrates our minds and hearts in the present moment to remember our destiny and destination while****‘waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ’ Titus 2:13****, when we will experience the ultimate change …glorification.”* Each chapter is its own jewel but my favorite is probably the last chapter on Naomi. Gospel hope just radiates from every page, so please pick this up and read…whether you are young or aging…male or female…there is much here for everyone.
36. **FORWARD HUNT (Galaxy Bridge Book 2),** by Daniel Gibbs, Steve Rzasa (2024). Here we have yet another greatly energetic and rip-roaring account of life in the new galaxy Sexton B.  Col. Larra may have assumed that this would be a quiet posting but it has been anything but. The trials have been many so fat with the incursion of the KIN, last time, bent on the total destruction of all biological lifeforms, to all the shenanigans on the station it seems to be a non-stop action packed assignment. The Kin have been beaten for now…or have they? They are ever vigilant looking for the Home of the Kin to take the fight to them rather than just waiting around for the next round. But…since things have quieted for the moment the top brass have given the green light to the holovid *War Patrol* to come on station and produce their new season from a new galaxy. Mateo abhors the holovid because of the crass way it portrays war and the warrior but it is his job to protect and allow them to do their thing…oh and his wayward son Damien is part of the production cast.  They have many things to work on as father and son that are interrupted by a new threat on station that is eating the Matrinid production workers and are targeting all the others on the station for a food source. If that is not enough they have a new species they are seeking diplomatic relationship with and Lex Gold is seeking a commercial relationship with (think Quark on Star Trek DS 9). *“Lex, who managed to put himself in every situation for his own benefit, blurring the lines between military and civilian affairs.”* But is all of this somehow related to the new arrivals, the Tarash, who come seeking to make a new “home” within the station. What is their story?  How is it going to affect the station and the Colonel’s ability to keep his people safe from a murderous rampage? The action hardly s ceases in this book so on to the next one that comes out on the 22nd, **FORWARD PACT.**
37. **CRONUS TEAM (ACE EVANS SERIES BOOK 3),**by Toby Neighbors (2020). Alex (Ace) Evan’s newly acquired skill (Alex’s INC [Implanter Neural Controller] is working in a way never imagined by the creators and keepers of the tech) is making people uncomfortable for a couple of reasons…that he might fall into the wrong hands and be misused or that it might stop at will before Loman can find out what is actually going on across the galaxy that may mean an empire of darkness creeping in. Well, the Team has been renamed Cronus Team for their continued heroism and hard work and they are sent to Arcadia the capital planet to celebrate and take a tour to beef up recruitment…well, that is the story at least. VP Loman is trying to get Alex next to the equipment that could get him his answers. Alex and his team seek to be good soldiers to protect and preserve but there are other forces bent on their destruction or at the least to use them for the subjugation and destruction of others. When they arrive in Arcadia they Alex undercovers what appears to be a major terrorist event that would certainly take down the corporation he works for. After too many deaths what they discover was not what they expected. And when they went on their tour to drum up recruits they are hit with protestors wanting their elimination as a power team. They barely make it off planet when they are whisked away to Skandia Seven , where Alex’s parents live only to get enmeshed in the politics there that are seeking to undermine the systems. The action never stops and Alex and his team are constantly in the middle of it whether they desire it or not. And now at this end of this book the ultimate disgrace.  How will they get through this? I have already begun the next in the five book series **SKANDIA SEVEN**since I can’t wait to find out.
38. **A BREATHING AFTER GOD: OR A CHRISTIANS DESIRE FOR GOD’S PRESENCE,**by Richard Sibbes, (Monergism 2019). This treatise captures for the Christian a clear understanding of what David felt and what God was saying through him for the future generations concerning the text from **Psalm 27:4*, “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple.”***He is said to have used the word “Breathing” in the title because it meant then *“a passionate longing for or a desperate cry to the Lord”.*And then he goes on to describe how it is that this can be true and should be true for all Christians. He breaks this passage down into three main points…the desire itself, the house of the LORD and the beauty/majesty/glory of Lord. He says, *“Now, in the words of the text that I have read, there is contained the holy prophet's care and desire, set down first in general,****'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after.'****And then a specification of that desire he specifies. What is that one thing he desired? That****'I may dwell in the house of the Lord,'****with the circumstance of time,****'all the days of my life.'****Now, after the desire in general, set out here by the object in general, the transcendent object,****'One thing have I desired of the Lord,'****and likewise by the frequency and fervency of the desire,****'I will seek after it still.'****I have desired it, and I will not cease. So my desire, it shall not be a flash soon kindled, and soon put out. No; but****'one thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek still.'****I will not be quiet till my desire be accomplished…One thing have I desired, and that will I seek after,' not by prayer only, but in the use of all means; as, indeed, he was never quiet till he was settled again in Sion, nor then neither till he had gotten materials for the temple, and a place for God's honour 'to dwell in,' Deut. 12:11. If desires be not the desires of the sluggard, there will be endeavour; as we see in the desire of David here, 'One thing have I desired, and that will I seek.' He used all means to enjoy communion with God sweetly.”*He asks many questions of the reader, because he wishes his readers to think through some of the questions that he has had brought to him like, *“But to come nearer, to make an use of trial, how shall we know whether we have benefit by, and whether we be truly in love with, the beauty of God's house or no, because many come hither? As in Noah's ark there were beasts that were clean and unclean, so there are many that come to the visible congregations; they are in the church****(as excrements are in the body),****but they are not of it.”* Or, *“If we find that we have little comfort and strength by the word of God, that we have not seen the beauty of it, what shall we do, what course shall we take?  Wait still. Wait still at the pool for the angel's stirring, John 5:4; for God at length will discover his power by his Spirit; he will discover his goodness, if not at the first, yet at length. Therefore let us use all sanctified means. And know this for a rule, that God's Spirit is an excellent worker. He will only work by his own instruments.”*He is clear and concise so that his readers don’t miss the crucial points.
39. **THE EVERLASTING REST OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN**, by William Bates, an English Presbyterian 1625-1699. This book was 1st printed after his death in the year 1701.  (digitally by Monergism 2020).Given the reality of death that surrounded the people of  their day we see a lot of books about the everlasting rest of believers in heaven…not expecting much “rest” this side of it. One of my favorite books on this subject if Richard Baxter’s **THE SAINT’S EVERLASTING REST**, who wrote himself from extreme and long-suffering illness…which seemed in most cases to be anxiety related depression… possibly a type of a bi-polar condition. He bases this whole book which like so many other Puritans in chocked full of scripture passages, on **Heb. 4:9- *“There remainth therefore a rest to the people of God.”***From this premise he goes on to exhaustively cover every aspect of this subject from describing heaven as our real rest…our real home along witht eh excellency of this rest that God has planned for His own whom he has called before the foundations of the earth. *“It is said of heaven, it is the saints' rest; they have a sweet and calm repose in the enjoyment of God. There a believer can say, ‘return to thy rest, O my soul.’ But in hell they rest neither night nor day, but they are under continual tormenting reflections on their own wickedness and the extremity of God's wrath. They have no interval nor space of ease. They are always upon the rack; torn and miserable in their own sense for ever. The scriptures set forth the possitive torments of hell thus; and all this shall be forever; the door is sealed upon them and their state is unchangeable, and they are continually restless, not only under the impressions of their present torment, but by the foresight that this shall never have an end. SINCE there is a divine and blessed rest hereafter for the saints of God, it should fortify us against all those afflictions and calamities that befal us in this present world; First, against all those afflictions that befal us as chastisements from God, those which are designed for preparing us for this blessed rest, and these are most usual. And Secondly, those afflictions which we suffer for righteousness sake.”*Given the fallen nature of this life and how things …all things are imprinted with sin, I was very encouraged by this quote as well, *“Repentance should accompany the soul to the gates of heaven, but it shall never enter there.”*He reminds us that this is an eternal rest…not a cessation of all activity as sleep but an on-going rest in the service of the LORD. This book is extremely helpful for us to focus on day to day on the gift of rest that comes only through belief in Christ Jesus our Lord.
40. **SKANDIA SEVEN** **(ACE EVANS SERIES BOOK 4),**by Toby Neighbors (2020). Things are not looking good for Ace as he and his team have seen captured and charged with terrorist acts against the Skandia System when they were just there to protect the interests on their company and benefactor… Ahzco Corporation. The media has been spinning a particular tale that has the human peoples across the galaxy split between the para-militaries like the CDF, and the mega –corporations they all serve. The message is one of insurrection but it is the para-militaries that are being branded as the “bad guys” and are squarely in the crosshairs of someone rich and powerful. We see once again one of the problems with people…absolutely power corrupts absolutely because enough is never enough for those who have so much. From the lowliest coward of a Captain to a med-tech there is money that can be made and that is what the plan is…involving Ace and his “special abilities”.  Lynn Fawk is cruising around the galaxy with her cronies spinning this web of deceit that is unraveling every institution and every company so that she can rule the galaxy. I know another extremely bad guy scenario but the story is tld so well you don’t want to put it down even if you think you know the outcome. Will our hero get out of the clutches of this megalomaniac who seeks the destruction of every known institution so she can rebuild the galaxy in her image? Will Cronus team survive the separation of Alex from them?  And what about the relationship between Alex and Nyx? And then there is Loman Haley …is he really on the up and up or is he yet another power hungry player seeking his own place in history? We will know the answer to these and more as I finish the series with book 5, **MECURIAL.**
41. **MECURIAL (ACE EVANS SERIES BOOK 5),**by Toby Neighbors (2020). A great conclusion to a great series. Mercurial certainly fits this book and the character of Ace Evans to a tee. Mercurial describes someone whose mood or behavior is changeable and unpredictable or…someone who is clever, lively and quick, which as we have seen over the course of this 5 book series fully defines Alex “Ace” Evans. In this last installment we find our hero on a grat superliner spaceship having been kidnapped and pushed into service for the one and only Lynn Faulk.  Alex’s friend rush to save him and at just the right time they are reunited but the villain Faulk slicks away with her General puppet in tow to live another day. Once back on the old CDF shp they head to where the action is to try and stop the massacre Faulk had engineered to weaken all the fighting forces of the other mega-corporations.  Upon arriving it becomes clear that VP Haley had been left high and dry and becomes of the tension in the system their ship gets damaged beyond repair until parts can be acquired. But that means they are sitting ducks with the other para-militaries seeing them as the enemy…so Alex…who iis prone to changes in behavior, is a little bit unpredictable…and very clever and quick takes things into his own hands as His power become more and more advanced destroying 12 or 12 enemy flotilla’s single handed.  The writing in this is so captivating I stayed up longer than I should have to get through the fight.  Well, things aren’t always as they seem…and while Alex is gifted and talented he can’t get a break. Faulk shows up again. As the old adage says, “the future of the galaxy hangs in balance” all based on what Alex does next. Everything comes down to the decision of a single man and his power. Has he gone mad? Will the evil aspiring empress get her due? Will Alex and Nyx get their happy ever after? All of this and more is answered in this last amazing book. Again like most of Toby’s book they are G to PG with only occasionally language out of that realm. But nothing else.
42. **THE BLOOD OF CHRIST,**by Horatius Bonar.  This is a great book with a look to the atoning work of Jesus and how each Christian needs to know the power of the blood to understand fully the extent of our salvation.  He answers the question…what did Jesus actually accomplish on the cross? And his simple answer that he gleans from the scriptures: The perfect pardon for all those who believe in Him. This treatise is based on I Peter 1:19,*“…the precious blood of Christ, like that of ua lamb vwithout blemish or spot.”*Bonar exposits for us the power and the value of the blood of Christ. Bonar begins with the mindset of the Jews who demanded that Pilate crucify Christ to show how the same attitude exists in all of us who are separated from Jesus through unbelief or immature belief. *“The arrow went deep and rankled sore in the wound. The anger of the priests arose. They denied the charge. They treated it as a slander upon their good name, and reviled the apostles as calumniators. The charge of blood they resented and repelled. But the fear, the anger, the remorse which awoke within them, betrayed the consciousness of guilt in a way which could not be mistaken. If they were not the actual murderers, they were at least accomplices in the deed of murder; and as such they were self-convicted and self-condemned. True children of Cain! Both in their crime, and in their evasive denial of it! This does seem strange. For, but a short time before, they had come forward voluntarily to take upon them the guilt and the consequences of this bloodshedding. How eagerly they shouted, “His blood be upon us and on our children!” Then they made light of this blood. They valued it at thirty pieces of silver. They rushed forward to shed it, as if they could not rest till they had poured it out.”* He then tells us why God the Father is holding the world guilty and its need for redemption. And then he mines deeper into the inestimable value of Christ’s blood itself. His way of communicating this truth is clear. *“This blood of the cross is that by which we are brought nigh to God (Eph 2:13); and to this blessed nearness we are invited. This blood of the cross is that by which “we have redemption” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14), even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace; and this redemption, this forgiveness, is freely set before us. It is by this blood that we have liberty of entrance into the holiest (Heb 10:19); and God’s voice to each sinner is to “enter in.” It is by this blood that we are cleansed and washed (1Jo 1:7; Rev 1:5) and this fountain is free, free as any of earth’s flowing streams, free as the mighty ocean itself, in which all may wash and be clean. Through it he is set apart for God. By it he has been bought, and by it he has been separated from a present evil world.”*It is this self-same blood that we must contemplate today to keep us on a footing of repentance and blessing.
43. **RIFLEMAN: (CONSCRIPT Book 2),**by Scott Bartlett (2024). After surviving a sneak attack to Cycler 3, Po and all his “buddies” find themselves on the moon to complete their training as “boots”. But that is not the only reason. They are there searching for whomever trained and funded the ones who attacked them.  There truly is no easy day for Po or anyone around him. The Emplor continues to show up ay opportune and inopportune times helping Po and the reader to remember that PO has a higher calling a bigger task than the one he is currently doing though Po can’t remember a time of being more capable and pleased with himself. Things have gotten worse at home on Psyche as older brother has been arrested and placed in to simjail leaving the rest of the family unsupported and on top on that his sister has struck up a relationship with the one man Po hates above all other humans…his father. While the intrigue and fighting is good on the moon this is quickly resolved stopping a horrible terrorist attack to Earth and they move on to bigger fish…attacking the Planet of Nibiru, the bane of their existence at this point; the point of where all the fighting needs to be brought to a head.  It is here on Nibiru that these Marines will grow from “boots” to men…if they survive this particular push. The fighting in intense and the campaign is just getting started. The satellites have all been destroyed losing for them their air superiority…so what awaits these heroes?  I am looking forward to the 3rd book LANCE, in the series, when it comes out in October…oh, too long to wait.  But alas…!
44. **A TREATISE ON THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL,** by John Colquhoun (1748-1827, minister in the Church of Scotland for 46 years originally published 1819, hard copy and digitally in 2023 by Reformation Heritage Books).  This copy has been modernized for today’s audience but is still an academic text that should be read by all seeking to understand the Law and the Gospel. Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley bring this book back to the church and have done an wonderful grace for the church. This is an author who had much influence in his day but one very few would recognize today. Another one of his master works is entitled **EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE** (reviewed in another year). Although Colquhoun states in the introduction that he is prone to repeat himself, I found him doing so very purposefully. This serves the reader in that Colquhoun expresses the same thought in a variety of ways before a chapter is over. This displays Colquhoun's mastery of the topic and serves to make one consider this book as a masterpiece on the law and gospel. He simply defines the law this way, *““The natural law of God, or the law of nature, is that necessary and unchangeable rule of duty which is founded in the infinitely holy and righteous nature of God, to obey which all men, as the reasonable creatures of God, are and cannot but be indispensably bound.”*The gospel is defined broadly by Colquhoun as the whole of divine truth, which consists of both law and gospel and is thus gospel in a full sense. Yet, Colquhoun is quick to provide the more narrow definition of the gospel as *‘good news, glad tidings, or a joyful message.’* Strictly speaking, the gospel in its narrow definition is, as Dr. J. Gresham Machen put it so well, *‘a piece of good news.’* Colquhoun then takes pains to show that the gospel is not just *‘repent and believe,’* which is rather the law in subservience to the gospel. Rather, the gospel is comprised of external promises. The gospel then commands nothing, says Colquhoun, *‘but it declares to us what God in Christ as a God of grace has done, and what He promises to do for us and in us and by us."* He puts thing quite simply, *“The law as a rule of life to believers, especially in this view of it, is very different from the law as a covenant of works. The precept of the law as a covenant is ‘Do and live,’ but the command of the law as a rule is ‘Live and do’; the law of works says, ‘Do or you shall be condemned to die,’ but the law in the hand of Christ says, ‘You are delivered from condemnation; therefore do.’ The command of the former is ‘Do perfectly that you may have a right to eternal life,’ but that of the latter is, ‘You already have begun possession of eternal life, as well as the promise of the complete possession of it, therefore do in such a manner as to advance daily toward perfection.’ By the former, a man is commanded to do in his own strength, but by the latter he is required to do in the strength that is in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus says to every believer,****‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness’ (2 Cor. 12:9)****; therefore, do.”*An excellent read one to which the Christian would do well in slowly making their way through.
45. **PARENTING WITH HOPE: Raising Teens for Christ in a Secular Age,**by Melissa Kruger (2024).  This book could be an amazing help for parents with teens…but it can also be a tremendous help to parents with young children trying to get their kids to a great place to become teenagers. She writes, *“Centuries ago, Puritan pastor John James encouraged, “Let your warmest affection, your greatest cheerfulness, your most engaging smiles, be put on when you teach Scriptural truths to your children.” 2 He understood that how we teach our children matters in their receptivity toward what we are teaching them. Modern research agrees. According to a recent study, parents with warm and nurturing relationships were more likely to pass on their faith and religious practices to their children.* *Diligence in our conversations with them doesn’t mean we are the ones doing all the talking. It means that we are always thinking about ways to allow the Word to saturate our conversations and the advice we offer.”*She speaks of consistency not just in their training but how important it is that our children see our consistency as they grow to reinforce that our faith is real and this is what faith looks like…long before they become teenagers. She says, *“Here’s the reality: Our kids need us to be clinging to Jesus, looking to him for grace, setting aside our idols, fighting our sin, and walking daily with God. They need to see that our words match our lives. They need to witness a real faith lived before them, one that accepts responsibility for mistakes and apologizes when necessary.”*The first part of the book deals with the early years and what is important to the family as it grows. Then parts 2 and 3 deal specifically with the needs during the teenage years and helping the parent and the teen to not just cope with the struggles in the world but actually gives helpful advice as to how the family can excel through this time. At the end you can find a study guide that can help shore up our weaknesses (parent and child) an to enable us as a family to look more and more to Jesus rather than our circumstances to overcome and flourish.
46. **FORWARD PACT(Galaxy Bridge book 3),**by Danial Gibbs and Steve Rzasa (2024). Wow, what a ride this book is. The Leaguer Ambassador is being controlled by the Kin the new offspring of the progenitors that the Lion of Judah had dealt to extinction, or so they thought. This infiltration is wreaking havoc on the station without anyone realizing the instigator. In the meantime a new species ahs emerged on the radar as the CDF is out looking for the Kin. They encounter the Qhix-na, a rag tag group of dissenters from the larger group that fought alongside of the ARCH against the Kin…the Qhix-Uh. Well, the Qhix-na want to have political asylum within the ARCH SATO agreement treaty. After a failed attempt on Ambassador McCreedy’s life, while she is in the medical facility, Col. Larra is called upon to negotiate the new treaty. But as an Ambassador for the CDF his abilities will be pushed to the ‘nth degree before any pact is signed. The verbal battles rage on especially when the Qhix-Un show up and want their people back.  And then the Kin show up at the exact location of the negotiation and a real battle begins and at the same time the Kin show up at the ARCH.  Fighting 2 fronts with limited assets… Why does the CDF always begin a conflict with the odds stacked against them? Well, as usual, God is on their side which bolsters everyone’s resolve to do the right thing…but will their faith even be enough this time. Will God intervene as He has in the past? What about the Kin on the station will they find them all? Stayed tuned for the next installment **FORWARD CRISIS** due out in June.
47. **GRAVITY STORM (Order of the Scion book 3),**by Toby Neighbors (2024). As much as I like Toby as an author and as much as I have found his other series’ captivating and fun…this one is getting to me. The whole Jedi meets the Dark Side theme has been done and done better. The Order of Scion (the Jedi in this story series), as I have said before are the good guys sent ( in this case by the Creator- God) to restore “order’ to the universe surrounding many of biblical virtues of appreciation of all image-bearers of God (even though many of them are quite fantastic and do not even resemble humans)…to ensure freedom for all to live without fear of other cultures seeking to oppress or annihilate them…while the Fray (Dark Side) hate the Order and everything it stands for since the Fray stand with the same power but as evil towards all other life forms set on not conversion but coercion by any way possible…even death for not bowing to them. The characters, Lt. Murphy who has been drafted among the Order is a strong character...very likeable but predictable.  And his old squad Leo Squad has been kidnapped by the Fray and they are learning the Power as well to be used against the order and other worlds. All of this is predictable…that the Fray would imitate the actions of the Order for evil gains…the Fray would seek the destruction of the order…killing many (younglings included) at a sacred training ground and at a sacred assembly to figure out what to do with the Fray attack.  (I hope this is sounding familiar to you.) If the characters weren’t so compelling I probably would be seeking something else by now but…alas I will await the next book…(no announcement yet.)…to see if I continue with the series or not.
48. **THE ARMCHAIR THEOLOGIANS GUIDE TO THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH,**by Timothy J. Mulder  (copywriter 2024). **NEW BOOK ALERT THAT EVERY REFORMED BELIEVER NEEDS TO PURCHASE AND READ AND THEN TEACH TO THEIR CHILDREN!**I cannot stress this enough.  This book comes as a result of a class he taught on the WCF at African Bible University in Kampala, Uganda. This is perhaps the best written and most helpful tool on the WCF written in my lifetime. I always referred to Sproul’s, **Truth’s We Confess**and G.I. Williamson’s, **The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes.** I have always thought of these two along with Alexander’s Confession to be the go-to books…but this one is the one I will keep on my shelf and maybe give away the rest. He gives us a full but short explanation of the history of the time and the history of the Confession itself, which is extremely good…not many books do that anymore. History…like context…is important. His explanation of WHY creeds and confession is fairly simple and clear …nothing new here unless you are new to these. But it is the genius of how he approaches the chapters and sections of the Confession even giving “HERESY ALERTS” along the way… (and they aren’t all about the RC Church).  There is no fear here in this writing of people being offended, which is good as well. There are many quotable sections and many great quotes from people throughout the ages but I have to say my favorite is this one from George Hegel just before the chapter entitled History of the Confession, *“What experience and history teach is that nations and governments have never learned anything from history or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it.”*When thinking of the Confession of Faith I am of the persuasion that it must be taught from the beginning of our children’s life to our deaths so that we can stay grounded and continue to exhibit a life that glorifies the Lord.  The Westminster Confession of Faith is the one document made by man that I seek to know and understand better with each passing year. This book will aid in our growth and may inspire others to want to study it as well. This will be standard reading for all future officers training classes.
49. **A FIELD GUIDE TO GENDER AND SEXUALITY ,**from Ligonier Editorial, (2024). This “field guide” goes along with the other “field guide” on **False Teachings** (2020). This is a question answer format to aid the reader in being able to think through the most common questions concerning the current discussions on sex, gender and identity.  While it focuses mainly on the current discussion around LGBTQ+ stuff, it also speaks to age old questions about attending non-Christian marriages and what to do concerning non-biblical re-marriage and cohabitation. All along the emphasis is on people of all types being made in the image of God asserting God’s Word to define His created design. This small booklet (120 pages) doesn’t waver in the least on God’s Word but does speak to how we are to approach these folks like all sinners speaking the truth in love. On the back it tries to make the case that we live in an ever-changing time where the Bible’s teaching is being rejected as if this is new. I think back to the Fall...or to the Israelites wandering in the desert or all that led up to the exile to say that if it is changing it is staying the same in its sinfulness. The Judges capture our times extremely well, as well. But all in all Ligonier has given the Church a great tool to help navigate these times so that we can be assured of God’s position and then be able to articulate that to those God puts in our path.
50. **THE PASTOR AS LEADER: Principles and Practices for Connecting Preaching and Leadership,**John Currie (2024). Because of the grind that is often called pastoral ministry this book seeks to support and encourage those who may be struggling with their identity, their purpose, their focus, and zeal. Grind because many pastors seem torn beween preaching and leading. He does this by from the beginning establishing a clear definition of pastoral leadership that he will use throughout the book. He says, *“This is why we have begun by defining pastoral leadership as ‘the process where, for the glory of God, a man of God, appointed by the Son of God and empowered by the Spirit of God, proclaims the word of God so that the people of God are equipped to move forward into the purposes of God together.’”*And that purpose?*“To be clear, the kingdom mission of the church, which a man of God has been set apart and sent to lead, is this: to extend the rule of God for God’s glory, by proclaiming Christ in his death and resurrection for sinners from all of Scripture, so that multitudes of disciples are made from all nations, through repentance and faith, who submit all of their lives to the rule of Christ and his commands****(Matt. 28: 18–20; Luke 24: 46–48).****It is nothing less than extending the redeeming righteous rule of God, through Christ the King, to the hearts and lives of multitudes, to the end of the earth until the end of the age.* *R. B. Kuiper described the Great Commission, in light of Christ’s rule over the whole universe, as commanding all men to “recognize him as king and observe whatsoever things he has commanded.”*He is not encouraging pastors *“to be like”*but to take our role and calling seriously. Trying to be like anyone else leads to burnout and despair. We are to be leaders based on his definition who prayer, lead, communicate a biblical vision with a biblical strategy and this is to be done from the pulpit as the pastor preaches through the Scriptures expositorily.  And since we are preaching God’s message we will not lose heart as Paul says when we seek to be a servant. *“But what distinguished the herald was that he was always under and represented the authority of his sender and that he announced his message with a loud clear voice. In the biblical period the term used for this kind of servant was kēryx. This is significant for our topic because, even though the noun kēryx is used sparingly in the New Testament, Paul chooses it in 1Timothy 2: 7 and 2 Timothy 1: 11 to describe his appointment as a preacher. He then chooses the verb (kēryssō), which the New Testament uses much more frequently, in 2 Timothy 4: 2 when he charges Timothy to preach the word. In the New Testament the preacher is a herald (kēryx), and to preach (kēryssō) is to herald God’s word. The preacher serves as an ambassador appointed to announce the word of his Master clearly and with his authority. Pastors, as preachers, are Christ’s sent servants who proclaim his will with his authority and summon others to respond to it.”* It is hard to burnout when we recognize who we are and who we have been called to represent before God’s people. This book is thoroughly Reformed but would be helpful to those churches that are congregational as well to help the pastor focus on his main purpose which is NOT heading up all the programs and making sure the finances are secure…but rather to focus on what the Bible declares we are to be focused on… ***“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*(Acts 6:4)**He makes the point that we need to be in prayer first then the ministry of the Word. After being the example of prayer then expositional preaching is the main vehicle to communicate vision and purpose to the people of God so they can be equipped to move forward into the purposes of God together. This is a long review but this is such a tremendous book that ought to be read by pastors and elders in whatever stage of ministry they are in.
51. **GROWNG IN CHRIST, by**J.I. Packer (1994).  This is sort of a companion book to **KNOWING GOD.**This was written to provide a resource book for study groups seeking to get a handle on The Apostle’s Creed, the doctrines of Baptism and Conversion. Learning how to pray the Lord’s Prayer and lastly, considering our blueprint for life in the 10 Commandments*. “Because Scripture calls God’s Ten Commandments “law” we assume they are like the law of the land, a formal code of dos and don’ts, restricting personal freedom for the sake of public order. But the comparison is wrong. Torah (Hebrew for “law”) means the sort of instruction a good parent gives his child. Proverbs 1: 8 and 6: 20 actually use “torah” for parental teaching.”* He makes it clear throughout that his desire to be helpful in Christians growing spiritually by learning and living out the will of God in Christ. In his introduction he begins with an interesting couple of paragraphs…read it slowly…*“Christianity is not instinctive to anyone, nor is it picked up casually without effort. It is a faith that has to be learned (once granted), and therefore taught, and so some sort of systematic instruction (catechumenate) is an essential part of a church’s life. Catechism simply comes from a Greek word meaning “make to hear” and so “instruct.” From this word comes the English words of catechism (the form of instruction), catechumen (the person under instruction), catechumenate (the organized set-up for giving instruction), and catechize (a verb which originally meant “instruct,” though today it refers especially to a question-and-answer method of teaching).”* Packer’s style in this book makes for easy study… and the questions at the end do in fact call us to reflect and meditate on what he has said so that it can be integrated into our lives thus enabling us to use it for the glory of Christ. They are short chapters but they are concise summing up the necessary information for the serious learner and pushing them to look further. So this book is for new believers trying to get a handle on what they believe and how to live that out. I love the simple but picturesque way he speaks of the sacraments: *“When you look at the two gospel sacraments (or ordinances, as some prefer to say) which Jesus left us, you realize that they are just slices of ordinary home life—a meal, with a wash preceding. Jesus’ choice of these two everyday events to be signs of saving grace shows us that as without washing and eating our physical health suffers, so without their evangelical counterparts spiritual health is not found.”* But this book is also for “older” believers reminding us of our purpose, our identity and the work that still lies ahead of us. Packer was the quintessential teacher.  THE Church was blessed to have him to be sure. They have recently printed this in a very attractive hardback but the content inside hasn’t changed. I say this to recommend that everyone would get this book and put it alongside **Knowing God** and refer to them often.
52. **COVENANTAL THEONOMY: A Response to T. David Gordon and Klinean Covenantalism,**by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. THD (2005). This work does exactly what the author set out to do and that was to refute a refutation of Greg Bahnsen position on theonomy and to punch holes in Klinean Covenantalism. At the time discussion was up close and personal for many within the PCA and the wider Reformed community. Gentry makes it clear that if Gordon has ever read Bahnsen he certainly doesn’t show it in his refutation. But this book is 20 years old and I would doubt that much of what is said in this book much matters to the greater church. Now, I am a fan of Kenneth Gentry, Jr. but having said that it is interesting to me that this refutation of a work that most don’t read anymore continues to be printed. The church has moved on because the Church doesn’t actually disagree with Bahnsen Reformed/ covenantal understanding of the Law…one wonders if they ever did really.  The Church reacted to the legalism that came from many of his follower’s years later. His positon on theonomy is a typical Reformed position hence, I suppose, the reason for the title **Covenantal Theonomy.**After reading this book I was taken back to the struggles we had within our own presbytery during this time with legalist/patriarchal theonomists who were seeking to resurrect the Law to bind the hands and hearts of Christians. The Law of God does not bind us as the Word of God …it sets us, who believe, free from the curse to live as God requires under God’s oversight and love within the boundaries He established for our good and His glory. Mu only critique of this book is that the author doesn’t define covenantal theonomy at the beginning giving the readers a baseline to compare with.  It’s in there…like Prego…but you have to mine it out among all the arguments against the positions of those for which the paper …now a book was originally written for. Books like this have their place in time and they can give vital historical information but does it really aid the argument today…with so many “new” players…I think not.
53. **THE FOREVER SHIP (Starship Omega Book 1)** by Scott Bartlett and Joshua James (2024). Scott is one of my favorite military sci-fi authors and his co-authoring with Joshua James makes for a good story and good content and great characters. Humanity is oppressed by the Ornu a serpentine race whose only reason to exist to conquer races making them vassals to serve them in their trek towards galaxy rule…and they have done a pretty good job of that so far. With their other vassals they are extremely strong and they strike without notice and then install “kill switches” in their vassals to keep them in line. Well, humans, being human… they can go along to get along only so long. Now there has been one family that has been a thorn in the side of the Ornu for years…the Hendersons. They have killed and imprisoned the men to keep the family in line sending the lone son Bill Henderson to re-education camps rather than waste his potential…and he has been the best Captain they have in the Armada to date. But bill and some on his grew are only biding their time looking for an opportunity.  Has that opportunity arrived in the form of Omega…a Primeval ship lost to time recently discovered. Could this ship be the catalyst to throw off the oppressors or is there another purpose for it and the fact that it has shown up now? What will it cost Henderson and his crew to utilize Omega appropriately? All of that and more will be disclosed in **ETERNITY’S BATTLESHIP** that doesn’t come out until next April.
54. **RESURGENCE (First Colony book 16) ,**by Ken Lozito (2024).  Thiis is yet another of my favorite series that Ken keeps producing from time to time. As the New Earther expand they keep looking for the Vemus that almost exterminated their race. Is this a good idea?  That is the question before them.  On one hand, if they find the origin of the Vemus they could strike a blow that the Vemus could not recover from. One the other hand, can they afford to expend the resources and time in the search when humanity needs to re-populate? All the regular crew is back some with major changes others not so much. The story starts off with normal routines. Relationships are growing …Cynergy and Ethan are talking about a family… Lauren IS pregnant … and Lenora is wanting more children… but there I one last simple mission before going home… famous last words*…“Major, we’ve got a situation here. Contact with a Vemus contagion is highly likely. We need to follow alpha-quarantine protocols,’ Connor said.”*After a “simple” survey team mission gets attacked by an alien and new form of Vemus everything changes. Ethan and Cynergy are swept along with fighting the Alpha or be lost forever. Now they must set their sights on finding the right way to deal with the infected and at the same time rescue the other teams captured by the Alpha Vemus before they turn completely away. The risk of space travel and exploration…true! But along the way Gen. Gates meets a curious alien who is one the Phantoms that they are convinced has been helping them along the way to fight the Vemus and the General finds himself at a crossroads on what to do going forward. Not sure when the next one will come out, but these are like old friends you simply pick up where you left off no matter how much time transpires in between.
55. **WEEKDAY RELIGION: How to live a Beautiful Christian Life,**by J. R. Miller (originally published 1880 and republished digitally by Monergism 2020). Again, as with all his works this is an extremely profitable book even after all this time. His writing style is not as contemporary as many would want but he is easy to read and extremely thoughtful in seeking to fetter out every possible argument and/or abjection for his positions without boring his readers, in the least. He states the purpose for this “little book” (over 300 pages!) this way, *“It may be that this little book will be accepted of the Master and sent by him on a mission of helpfulness to some struggling lives. It is now laid humbly at his feet with this simple hope. Its aim is to help young Christians especially, to take the religion of Christ out of closet and sanctuary and creed—and get it into their daily lives of toil, temptation and care! Perhaps none of us get the best that we might get from our relation to Christ. Perhaps none of us, if any, live as well as we believe. The moralities that we know—we do not follow. The helps that are put into our hands—we do not use when we are climbing the hard, steep paths, or staggering under the burdens of life. The comforts that religion gives—do not comfort us in sorrow.”*In this medium sized book he covers many topics beginning with the question of What is our life? This sets the stage for where he goes throughout the rest of the book for if we can’t answer this then there is no way to have a beautiful Christian life. He talks about how we are to use or Bibles, our relationships, specifically the marriage alter and afterwards. He speaks of our religion in the home, humility, hospitality, giving encouragement, manly men, amusements, old age and dying, and this isn’t even everything he covers. Each chapter is well thought out and executed and helpful in our meditations in God’s Word to the end in which he seeks for us. Look at what we have to look forward to which is the basis for our beautiful Christian life, *“It is in the light of such facts as these—that we must regard the life that is given to each of us. It is indeed a sacred burden! It is no light and easy thing so to live—as to fulfill the end for which we were made and redeemed. Life is no mere child's play! Every moment of it is intensely important, and charged with eternal responsibility. It is when we look at life in this way—that we see our need of Christ. Apart from him—there can be only failure and ruin. But if we give ourselves to him, he takes up our poor perishing fragment of being, cleanses it, puts his own life into it—and nurtures it for a glorious immortality! We have a saying that, ‘What cannot be cured—must be endured.’  But the very phrasing tells of an unyielding heart!”*I have yet to read one of Miller’s books that I have not recommended to someone in particular this one was no different. Great stuff for even the young in heart…like me.
56. **THE SAINT’S SURE AND PERPETUAL GUIDE: A Treatise Concerning the Word**, Robert Bolton, (1572-1631) (originally published in England 1634 after his death, copyright digitally 2024 by Monergism.) The main text that guides his mouth and hand in this treatise in **Psalm 119:105- *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”***He states in an overarching statement, *“For God's Word is unto every man that hears it, either the savor of life unto life, or the savor of death unto death: It is a two-edged Sword; it either kills the sin, or the soul, it must and shall prosper in the work for which it is sent. God will raise glory, he will win honor unto himself, from every man. Hence it is, that God's Word is called, The Word of Salvation,****Act. 13:26****. The Word of Grace,****Act. 14:3****. The Word of Life,****Phil. 2:16****. The Power of God unto Salvation, Rom.****1:16.****For there is no power of Grace, or spiritual life, to be had ordinarily upon Earth, or salvation and eternal life to be hoped for in Heaven; except a man be enlightened with the knowledge, and enlived with the power of the holy Word of God”*And because of this contrast he adds this underlining text that seems to motivate the writing even more from **John 3:20-21- *“For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”***This treatise: contains the saint’s sure and perpetual guide of preparations to be before the Lord which has as its desire leading to self-enriching examination and/or meditations, concerning the word, the sacraments of baptism and the Lords Supper. A good portion of this treatise is its devotion to our preparation as His people. He states when speaking of the need for preparation of our hearts for our daily task of glorifying God and being prepared to worship , *“In Exodus 19:10, the people were sanctified, and washed their clothes, and prepared themselves for two days, and the third day they were ready to attend what the Lord would say unto them. As in that extraordinary promulgation of the Law, the people were to be prepared extraordinarily; so, from proportion of that practice, and precedency, ordinary preparation is necessary for the ordinary preaching and hearing of the Word, if we look that it should powerfully and faithfully presented and convincingly applied to our life before the Lord.”*He also makes clear that part of this preparation is in teaching our family to be prepared, *“…be diligent in instructing and teaching thy family: If thou art set over others, a little knowledge will increase greatly, by this means.****Gen. 18:17,19.****the Lord said; Shall I hide anything from Abraham? No: And he gives this reason; I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord. If you teach your families, God will teach you.”* A difficult book to read. If this is how he preached I am not sure I could have sat that long…but having said that the content is timeless.
57. **WHAT’S WRONG WITH THE CHOSEN?** by Timothy Mulder (2024). Tim make’s a great case for a second commandment violation and an implied violation of the people who watch thinking that this is a Christian/biblical depiction of the life of Jesus. This whole show along with many of the other depictions of Jesus in our culture and in our churches was a no-brainer for the past preachers and teachers of the Gospel. Tim states at one point that Puritan *Thomas Vincent said, ‘It is not lawful to have pictures of Jesus Christ, because His divine nature cannot be pictured at all, and because His body, as it is now glorified, cannot be pictured as it is, and because, if it does not stir up devotion, it is in vain; if it does stir up devotion, it is a worshipping by an image or picture, and so a palpable breach of the second commandment.’”*This is one voice among so many that would have condemned this show out of hand. While Tim does a great job breaking the seasons down (episode by episode) to show its blatant inconsistencies with the biblical record, I believe his work on Mormonism is the highlight of this whole work; for he has shown conclusively that Mormonism is foundational for this show which is a belief system that is in conflict with the person of Christ, the Son of God, the 2nd person of the Trinity… fully God and fully man. I recommend this book not so much for his work on its second commandment violation (which I agree it is and the argument is sound) but because Christians today do not know the difference between the cult Mormonism and Christianity which is what leads to fully accepting even a second commandment violation. To be fair Tim actually reviews the show overall in a positive light as far as a secular production would be concerned…great acting, cinematography, story flow plotline progression…but a show that purports to be biblical and only has 5% actual biblical material in it...isn’t. Even Dallas Jenkins says, Dallas Jenkins said, *“95% of the content for The Chosen is not from the Bible.”* Almost all of *The Chosen* is made up! And people use it for Bible Studies?
58. **I, STARSHIP: A Space Opera Book 1,**by Scott Bartlett (June 2024). This one is different and ii am having a hard time getting my mind around this concept of a Reconstituted Human Mind being uploaded into a starship as the people of earth go on their first interstellar voyage because of a threat from an alien race that is literally cobbling up civilization and few light years away but are on their way to earth. Sargent Henry Morgan died. I love the way Scot puts this in the beginning, *“As a Marine, Henry Morgan would have said it was more likely he’d die from enemy fire than from being struck by a flying lawnmower while at a baseball game. But it was the lawnmower that ended up taking him out.”*Now he has awaken a hundred years later as this reconstituted mind …or a human soul.  He is NOT an A.I. for he is a living entity by virtue of the fact that his very soul …all that he is was captured into this “computer program.” Well, Earth needs a military mind and when Henry was alive he was a decorated Marine leading men in countless engagements. But they need Henry…not just for his mind (he’s the only Heritage Mind™ with any military experience that survived the Great Power Surge of 2072) and soul but also to babysit the people who will be sleeping (cryo-sleep) as they travel 80 plus years to their destination to encounter this alien that is threatening them. I have seen this concept in other authors like Ken Lozito and it took me awhile to get used to that one who inhabited a robot. Aliens and space battles are the backbone of scifi and I Starship delivers looking forward to the next one. I want more Henry less other character development but then if this is to be a series then we need to get the supporting cast up and running as well. But right now I dislike most everyone in the CIC. It seems like they did not want the mission to make it.  I will stay with this, waiting on the next book because I am such a fan of Scott’s other works.
59. **OF GLORIFICATION: Of the General Resurrection, the Last Judgement, and Everlasting Misery of the Wicked, and Happiness of the Godly**, Sir Edward Leigh-(1602-1671) (first published 1654, digitally by Monergism 2024). This work is taken from a great body of work entitled, **From A System or Body of Divinity: Consisting of Ten Books Wherein the FUNDAMENTALS and main Grounds of RELIGION are OPENED: The Contrary ERRORS REFUTED: Most of the CONTROVERSIES Between US, the PAPISTS, ARMINIANS, and SOCINIANS Discussed and handled. SEVERAL SCRIPTURES Explained and vindicated from corrupt Glosses. A Work seasonable for these times, wherein so many Articles of our Faith are questioned, and so many gross Errors daily published.**You gotta love these guys. By the time you finished reading the title you have decided whether this is something you want to read or not. He begins by discussing the doctrine of the general resurrection by emphasizing key passages in his work like, **Matt. 22:32, John 5:28-29 and I Cor. 15**to underscore its certainty. Never heard of him? Well, this text found in his great **work A System or Body of Divinty** and His other works like it are said to have been vital for good understanding of Reformed eschatology at the time….and after reading this I concur but would say that it is also helpful for today. Along with His great doctrinal dissertation he also contrasts the Bible’s teaching on these things with many of the Roman Catholic practices and teachings concerning the end time, which again make’s this a most helpful tool even today.  Leigh’s argument is deeply rooted in Scripture as are most arguments put forth by Christian writers of the 17th and 18th centuries. But his style (short paragraphs laced with scripture) makes his arguments easily followed. He breaks down his categories so clearly that they can be referred too with very little searching later on when the minister or lay person needs reference. This is a small book covering an immense subject masterfully.*“In the first respect, our salvation and all its degrees are wholly to be ascribed to the gracious favour of God in Christ. In the second,*

*to the mercy of God and merit of Christ. In the third, to the mercies of God redoubled and multiplied upon us, and not to any merit of ours.”*

1. **A GREAT GULF FIXED,**by Brownlow North (1810-1875) (first preached in 1859 were first published in 1861 and re-published  often even in multiple languages and then digitally by Monergism 2023) This is collection of 9 sermons of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus from **Luke 16:19-31**. Brownlow North was born into a politically connected family and lived a life of ease and until he was powerfully “saved” by God from a disease that should have killed him in that day and age. He responded to God’s call not only as a believer but also as a preacher becoming the first Evangelist for the Free Church of Scotland as so many favored his style and content of preaching even though he had no formal theological training. The fruitfulness of Brownlow North’s ministry led him to become known as the ‘John the Baptist of the great awakening of 1859’. Like the great evangelists after him hundreds were brought to the Lord through his teaching and this particular series of sermons was used of God to drive many within the Church and outside the Church to their knees in recognition of their need for Christ. His approach was to begin by explaining that earthly suffering was not salvation. *“No man was ever lost simply because he was rich; neither was any many ever saved simply because in this world he had been poor and miserable.”*Then he moves on to tell us much about the Rich Man.  Probably the most important thing he relates to us is the difference between the Rich Man and Lazarus, *“The rich man’s sin was contentment without God. The rich man had everything but God and Lazarus had nothing but God. The sin of the Rich Man was CONTENTMENT WITHOUT GOD. Born without God—that was his curse; contentment without God—that was his sin. Was I wrong when I said it was a sin that rich and poor may alike commit?”*Simple but profound. So along with this he highlights some things that the Rich Man never did see or do until he went to hell….chief among them was...he looked to heaven and he prayed. He prayed not to God but to Abraham. *“The Rich Man lived and died without God, and never on earth saw the kingdom of Heaven; but now in Hell his eyes have been opened to see: ‘In torments he lifts up his eyes, and sees Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.’ He now sees not only the misery to which he has brought himself, but the unfathomable glory from which he has excluded himself. How literal and real are those things to him now which once seemed so dreamy and insubstantial. God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the devil and his angels—are now too convincingly proved to be real persons; Heaven and Hell are now seen as real places. But not only does the Rich Man see what he never saw on earth, but his very first act in Hell is to do what he never did on earth. No sooner was he in that place of torment than he began to pray, This will always be the case the moment a man for the first time sees the kingdom of Heaven. Whether that first time be in Heaven or in Hell makes no difference; the moment a man sees the kingdom of Heaven, he is certain to begin to pray. The reason is this, he sees a satisfying portion, and his heart thirsts after it."*The Rich Man prays for water…having Lazarus come with a drop, and special dispensation for His brothers…but there is a FIXED GULF…*“"Between us and you there is a great gulf." and like Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, that gulf is FIXED. As surely as the dwelling place of the redeemed is everlasting, and as surely as the Lord is round about His people henceforth and forever, so surely is the gulf that separates between you and Heaven a FIXED GULF.”* Again this is an old work but it speaks so well to our on-going search spiritually.
2. **TRADITIONS OF COURAGE (Grimm’s War book 7),**by Jeffrey Haskell (2024). Wow, a really wild ride. Key people are injured and some thought to be dead in the battle on the planet with Gunnery Jennings at the tip of the spear. And then there is the battles going on in space. Jacob has his task to keep the Guild from resupplying the troops on the ground and Nadia has to leave safety to once again spy on the Guild at their home world. There is espionage…there is intrigue…there is budding love and there is sorrow and grief. The ***Interceptor***…the toughest ship/shark in the galaxy, with the best crew…do their thing. Jennings and her crew do their thing on the planet as supplies run out for the mercenaries of the Guild the Terran Republic. Where does this leave the Guild? Will Nadia make it back from her assignment? Will the whole crew be re-unted or will some be lost along the way in this galaxy wide conflict with the Guild? For those of us who are friends of this series and these characters these should be question enough to read this great book in the series and be left waiting on the next book **GRIMM’S LEGACY** book 8… next year…ouch!
3. **FORWARD CRISIS (Galaxy Bridge book 4)**by Daniel Gibbs And Steve Rzasa (2024).  Another wild ride with a character base that gets stronger and stronger even the “bad” guys. There is a pulsar in a remote solar system that is powering the Kin’s systems giving them a sense of overwhelming superiority a new “emotion” for the Kin one that the dissenters think will be their ruin especially as they seek to destroy all biological life. Back in Sextons B Joint Base Sagittarius ARCH is preparing for Christmas time even with a whole bevy of aliens who don’t know what Christmas is…and don’t care as long as it makes them money. But then that dream is shattered in a moment…the ARCH is attacked or its systems have failed and Mateo is powerless to get it going again. Every hour spent on getting the station back going again brings them one hour closer to crashing into Zeivlot and killing everyone on the station and perhaps the whole planet below. Everyone finds themselves in predicaments that they wouldn’t have predicted. Things seem to be “on”, but very little is working.  Thankfully life support is working but that is about all. Sections have been cut off from the rest of the station as the bulkheads locked into place at the first sign of catastrophic failure so they cannot even be airlifted off the station. Who or what is behind this?  The obelisk is reflecting a charge from somewhere which may be the culprit but the obelisk in and of itself can do nothing except keep the wormhole open. What is going on?  While our heroes on the station work furiously to find a remedy there is a lot more going on out in space.  The Kin are up to something.  Are the two things related? Well… This read is another remarkable read for any who are fans of these authors. Looking forward to the next book, **FORWARD RAID,**book 5, due out in a couple of weeks.
4. **DAUGHTER OF THE NIGHT(addition to the Scion series),**by Toby Neighbors (2024). Legends are told on Azree’el’s (angel of God? or the devil?) home world of the Daughters of the Night.  Are they legends or are they real?  The legends also speak pf a great warrior coming to save her people. Now as a Fray warrior she is believing the prophesies more and more, especially with the help of her deceptive “boss” G’all Gotha (yep, you read that right!). Her master is a cruel Vanj alien named Usk and he is horrendous to look at and a predator animal to be around especially with the help of the special magic-the gravity that he controls around him. Azree’el has been trained to killed, to control the divine magic, as the Fray call it and to hunt Scion Warriors or heretics as the evil Fray call them.  Just like Mitch Murphy from the Scion Series is taught that all Fray are evil the Fray are taught that all Scion are evil. This is easily setting up to be a battle between the top warriors of each.  In this corner for the Dark side of the Force (the divine magic)- The Fray- we have Azree’el and for the Light side of the Force (the Power and the Knowledge of the One Creator)- The Scion Order we have Lt. Mitch Murphy. It seems Toby was writing the next book in the Scion series when this character came into view in **SUPERNOVA** and he had to stop and write about her, and I for one am glad he did. Great in-between book while waiting of the next

book in series. Still not entirely sure about the series as a whole but this book actually makes me want to give it another chance.

1. **THE CHRISTIAN'S COMBAT OR, HIS TRUE SPIRITUAL WARFARE Christ over-love, that cannot be you will say, But Christ above all others' love you may, or THE CHRISTIAN'S COMBAT: OR, HIS TRUE SPIRITUAL WARFARE; Wherein is laid down the nature, power, and cunning deceit of Satan, the great enemy of our salvation. With the means whereby every good Christian may withstand his dreadful assaults**., By Christopher Love, late preacher of God's word in the city of London (first published 1664, 13 years after he was put to death at the Tower of London,  digitalized by Monergism 2021) A powerful exposition of **Ephesians 6:10-20** with special; emphasis on **verse 11, *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”***He states*, “Whosoever therefore resolves to be God's servant must make account to be his soldier also, and whilst with Nehemiah's followers, with one hand they perform the work of their callings and Christianity, they with the other wield their weapons against their spiritual enemies, who continually endeavour to hinder the Lord's building. For no sooner do we become friends to God, than presently Satan assaults us as his enemies.”*He makes statements that we ought to be mindful of as believers but I think we often don’t, *“Therefore, in an enemy who proclaimeth war against us, we are to consider two things: first, his will; secondly, his power. If he have will to hurt us and no power, he is not to be regarded; if power and no irreconcilable malice, he is not so much to be feared. But if his power be great and his will malicious, it is time then for us to look about us and muster up all our forces.* *Therefore, for this cause he willeth us to take upon us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to resist in the evil day, that is, the time of temptation, which is therefore called the evil day, partly because therein Satan tempteth us unto evil, and partly because it is a time of trouble, adversity, and affliction, when Satan sifteth us with his temptations.”*Just one example of how he defines the parts of the armor, *“I come now to the second part of our armour, which is the breastplate of righteousness, and the excellency thereof, by which we are to understand a good conscience, true sanctification, and a godly life, which we are also to put on according to the example of our grand Captain Christ Jesus,****Isaiah 59:17: ‘He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head.’****Then shall not Satan's darts pierce us, so long as we are armed with a good conscience and a godly and innocent life.”*After reading this book we are left to wonder are we ready for the on-going battle? If not, why not? Is the devil just a myth or is he real and someone to stand against. Do we have on the whole armor of God or just parts since we may not believe the threat to be real or eminent? A small book made up of sermons to encourage the flock of his day that were under constant assault for the faith.
2. **THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION: Gathered into six Principles. And it is to be learned by ignorant people, that they may be fit to hear Sermons with profit, and to receive the Lord's Supper with comfort,**by William Perkins (1558-1602) Printed in 1591 digitalized by Monergism 2023. This “booklet” was a handout, leaflet, or a common pamphlet (think tract) that was given out to those who have just professed faith or those to whom wanted to be able to profess faith before joining the Church, at that time. Based on **Psalm 119:130-*“The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.”***The author himself says,*“I respond once more, merely reciting all these without a book is insufficient unless you can grasp the meaning of the words and apply the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer to your hearts, consciences, and your daily lives and conduct. This is precisely where you fall short. As an aid to remedy your ignorance and lead you to genuine knowledge, sincere faith, and true repentance, I have outlined the fundamental principles of Christian Religion in six straightforward and accessible rules, even simple-minded individuals can easily grasp. Alongside these rules is an explanation of each word. If you lack other useful guidance, then employ my efforts for your instruction: start by memorizing the six principles and understanding their meanings. Once you have done so, and have also grasped the exposition, which, when well comprehended and partially felt in your heart, will enable you to benefit from sermons, unlike now. The basic elements of the Catechism, including the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the institution of the two Sacraments, will become more accessible to you.”*The six principles are quite simple: (1) What do you believe concerning God?, (2) What do you believe concerning man and concerning yourself?, (3) What means are there for you to escape this damnable state?, (4) But how can you partake of Christ and His benefits?, (5) What are the ordinary means to obtain faith/, and finally (6) What is the state of all people after death? To show how simple-faithed people can be he starts off with many assumptions  (29 in all) of the average church goer like, *“That faith is a person’s good intention and good service to God…That God is served by reciting the 10 Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed,…That you can keep the Commandments as well as God will allow you.,…That a person who attends no sermons may believe as well as someone who hears all the sermons in the world.”*Obviously we have similar ones today so this book is also for us. So each principle is set up with a question and an answer to the doctrine as a catechism would be…easy to read…easy to follow and easy to memorize, if one is so inclined.
3. **FORSAKEN COMMANDER (The Arternien Was Book 1),**by G.J. Ogden (2023). The Arteriens are back! Back story: Now who are they? They are an experiment gone badly over 150 years before these stories begin. The Union was mixing things together to develop a super race for the next step in human evolution rather than letting it takes its own course…as men are prone to do. Well, as usual, this super race rebelled, (doesn’t anyone watch the movies on this all the way back to the Star Trek Series…can anyone say Khan Noonian Sigh?).  Once these rebelled they made more…along with spaceships called *Longswords* that actually interface with their bio-engineered, augmented crew who were programmed to serve the Union. Each of these ships was named after the Longswords of King Arthur’s knights. And they set out to fight the Arteriens who were now placing their consciences into almost Immortal bodies made of almost indestructible materials. *“Carter approached the meeting table in the dead center of the room, and the Grand Vizier approached too, his gleaming blue eyes tracking Carter like laser sights. Despite their striking, almost supernatural appearance, there was something about the Aterniens that always struck Carter as off. Their skin was too unblemished; eyes too bright; symmetry too exact; movements too precise. In seeking perfection, they had made themselves bizarrely unreal.”*So fight they did with Master Commander Carter Rose and his crew of the *Galantine* being at the point of the spear. The war ends with an armistice and an agreement not to do this again.  The Union was so sure of themselves and their diplomacy that they did away with all the material concerning the ships and how people were augmented to be a super race even if they were committed to the Union. Fast forward 100 plus years and Master Commander Rose is living a quiet life at the ripe old age of 172 years old and now the Arteriens are back! His old nemesis has broken all the agreements and has returned to get rid of humanity. So the Union sends out a “wet behind the ears” Major Carina Larsen to track him down and get Rose to come back in for the fight ahead. It is a very comical few chapters as she convinces him of the desperate need but as the story progresses we see and “feel” the angst and joy of old friendship reestablished and the grief of friends lost in a way that shows the authors talents…and when it comes to fighting his old enemy the fight and battle “scenes” keep you wanting more. Ogden could easily become my newest on-going author.  His works are a bit more “colorful/salty” with a few “F” bombs thrown in but the Master Commander hates that word so we will see.
4. **OF GOD’S WORK FROM A SYSTEM OR BODY OF DIVINITY: Consisting of Ten Books Wherein the FUNDAMENTALS and main Grounds of RELIGION are OPENED: The Contrary ERRORS REFUTED: Most of the CONTROVERSIES Between US, the PAPISTS, ARMINIANS, and SOCINIANS Discussed and handled. A Work seasonable for these times, wherein so many Articles of our Faith are questioned, and so many gross Errors daily published.**by Edward Leigh, Esquire, and Master of Arts of Magdalene Hall in OXFORD. Published by Turk's Head in Fleet Street over against Fetter Lane,1654 (digitalized by Monergism 2024.) The book I read is book 3 dealing with God’s decree in predestination, election and reprobation, and then the execution of these decrees in creation . With this second half he deals with many of the things published at the time and before concerning how people saw the act of creation and the 6 days of creation. He takes the time to discuss angels to ad nauseum much of the information being speculation at best, especially good and bad angels. Ending the book with a whole chapter on God’s providence which was actually the best part of the book. In one example of how he “speaks” concerning creation we see an almost poetic approach to his academic treatise, *“It is called in Latin Luna from lucendo, says Tully, or because sola lucet nocte, says Varro. In Hebrew, Yareach and Yerech, words which signify a month, because it is renewed every month. The Sun is the glorious servant of all the world; therefore, it has its name in Hebrew from serving. The Sun is the fountain of heat and light, the life of the universe, the great torch of the world, and the ornament of heaven. If God had not beautified Heaven with these excellent bodies, light and heat could not have been equally and in due quantity conveyed into all the quarters of the world. We must observe this work so as to praise God for it, to inform ourselves of His nature, and strive to work more love, fear, obedience, and confidence in ourselves towards Him. The Apostle says that in the times before the Gospel, the Gentiles might have found God as it were by groping (Acts 17:27).”*Speculation and ignorance of the greater world around him in the natural sciences was evident, *“There have been known whales six hundred feet long and three hundred and sixty feet broad, some resembling mountains, and some like islands. God himself, speaking of his own power over all creatures, mentions only two: the behemoth, Job 40:15 to the end, which is the elephant; and the leviathan, Job 41, throughout, which is the whale, this being the greatest among fishes, as that among beasts.”*All through this academic treatise he calls his students back to the simple faith of acknowledging God greatness in the things He has provided and with the quote I will end this review*, “We must acknowledge our faultiness with sorrow and humility for not observing more seriously and usefully this work of God. We have perpetual use of timber and fuel. We eat much fruit from these trees and benefit from God's work continuously. We sit on wood, feed on wood, and dwell under wood fashioned for our use. Every step outside brings us in view of some tree, great or small. Yet, we do not notice God in this work nor praise His name for making all these trees. Let us correct this fault and stir ourselves to consider God in this work. Praise Him for fruitful trees and all other kinds of trees. Acknowledge His power, wisdom, and goodness in them, and His exceeding bounty and tender care for humanity in furnishing the world with innumerable sorts of trees. Let us be careful to preserve these works of nature for our own use and for posterity. Let us plant trees for future generations.”*
5. **SUPERNOVA (Order of the Scion book 4),**by Toby Neighbors (2024). This one is so much better.  I think the addition of Azree’el from **DAUGHTER OF THE NIGHT**was a great additional protagonist with the ability to actually turn making the plot twists even better. As we have seen the Order is under attack by the Fray led by an interesting alien Gal Gotha…actually it is on the verge of extinction but they are still trying to survive. It is in this book the LT Murphy meets Azree’el and fights her twice and wins.  But because he sees something in her…beauty, likeness, or whatever… he can’t bring himself to kill her as he has done to her masters. But Gal Gotha is on the hunt for Earth in retribution for the killing s by Murphy of his best Fray. And at the same time the Fray is hunting down the remaining members of the Order. So much death and carnage going on and at the same time friendships continue to grow and being reunited with Leo Squad has bolstered Murphy’s resolve and desire to be with Mara and at the same time save Earth. This is the beginning…or the end of a war that stretches from on galaxy to another with no apparent end in sight for the Order will not go quietly and the Fray are as deadly as ever… and then there is Gal Gotha’s vendetta with Murphy and his desire to destroy Earth.  What will our heroes do? The warfare and the personality dilemma’s continue to build as the Power and Knowledge builds within LT Murphy and the rest of Leo Squad perhaps that last line of defense for Earth.
6. **THE LIFE OF PETER: Molded in the Master's Hands** by Derek W.H. Thomas (2024). Simon Peter, a man with two names and a conflicted spirit one that we can all in one way or another relate to. We see ourselves in Peter’s wavering…his prejudice…and his lack of understanding. And we also desire to see in ourselves his boldness for the Gospel of Christ. *“Jesus had taught Peter how to read his Bible and how to understand it. And such knowledge had made him bold. ‘Boldness’ is a term that Luke uses eleven times in Acts. It begins and ends his narrative (4: 13, 29, 31; 9: 27–28; 13: 46; 14: 3; 18: 26; 19: 8; 26: 26; 28: 31). It is something for which Peter and the other believers pray for once this inquisition is done (4: 29). It is something that we, too, should pray for. As Peter later wrote, we must be prepared ‘to make a defense to anyone who asks [us] for a reason for the hope that is in [us]’ (1 Peter 3: 15).”*This book survey’s the story of Peter from the first time he meets the Lord to His defining moments in Acts and Galatians. Thomas tells us to remember that what was true for Peter is and will be true for us. *“Faith will always be tested. It was one of the very first lessons that the Apostle Paul learned following his first missionary journey: ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God’ (Acts 14: 22). Peter would reflect on this idea many times afterward: ‘Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed’ (1 Peter 4: 12–13). ‘And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you’ (5: 10*).” He seeks to help us see God’s work of sanctification in Peter so that we can be encouraged as we walk the journey that God has placed us on. He says, *“Sometimes Jesus may ask of us things that do not make sense to us, but they do to Him. It is the way of wisdom to do as He says. His own mother had the presence of mind at a wedding in nearby Cana of Galilee, when the wine ran out, to tell the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (John 2: 5). That is always the proper response.”*But as much as this is a book about Peter this is also a book about Peter’s and our Lord and what he expects of all His followers. *“What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? Jesus answered this question, telling Peter and the rest of the disciples: ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?’ (Matt. 16: 24–26). Jesus does not desire half-hearted discipleship. Following Jesus must be all or nothing. He wants us to be all in. Not 50 percent but 100 percent. He desires all there is of us. Body and soul. Heart and mind. Will and affections.”*
7. **FORWARD RAID (Galaxy Bridge Book 5)** by Daniel Gibbs, Steve Rzasa (2024). Another great book in this series in the Sextans-B quadrant of the “new” galaxy that the *Lion of Judah* was thrust into years before. In this book we are acquainted with the Joint Base Sagittarius Arch sister station Joint Base Aperture Bravo on the other side of the wormhole connecting the two galaxies. The Kin keep making hit and run almost guerrilla type advances and Col. Larra has had about enough of it so they set out in search of the Kin Home to seek to take the fight to them. They have had word of the Kin attacking one of their outer most posts so they send a survey and rescue party, *““The Thomas S. Gates emerged from its Lawrence drive–generated wormhole on the edge of the Haradum system, with the frigate Nietz and the destroyer Icarus riding high and ahead of the heavy cruiser in a lopsided triangle formation. There were no shots fired at them, no scans levied in their direction. Jimenez drummed his fingers against the arms of his chair. I almost would have preferred a hostile reaction. It would have made our choice of response so much clearer.”* But they do not encounter resisetence making it clear that the KIN are playing the long game. This particular system is a rich one especially for the needs of the Kin, *“…“ixdo crystal serves not just as a building block of their hulls but as a conductor and generator of power.’ ‘I’m sorry, did you say generator of power?’ ‘Bingo.’ Sherman nodded. ‘Individual crystals, like the ones the size of your hand that the spec warfare boys brought back with the Gates, don’t do much on their own, but string ’em together and reconfigure their internal structure in a certain pattern, and they ramp up big-time. We still don’t know what the Kin use to kickstart that power generation—probably some form of fusion, ’cause it doesn’t seem as powerful as our antimatter reactor—but once they get it going, they can obtain obscene levels.’”*(think dilithium crystal in Star Trek).  Mateo decides to use a piece of alien tech to get where he needs to be in a shorter period of time after he was pushed in that direction from divine help. Col. Larra will do everything within his power to keep the amount of death to a minimum but what about the ultimate sacrifice? Another great read from these guys. Next up **Forward Shield**in September.
8. **A LONG OBEDIENCE IN THE SAME DIRECTION: Discipleship in an Instant Society**by Eugene H. Peterson edited and updated by his son Leif Peterson after his father’s death. This version includes the eulogy that he gave at his father’s funeral.This is a 40 year old classic and still speaks volumes to our society …to the Lord’s Church as we are sojourners in this world being led by His Word. The church and our society are still fixated on the quick fix but within the Songs of Ascent (Psalm 120-134) we find a time honored prescription for discipleship…which is a long obedience in the same direction. In the original Peterson said to those reading, *“For those who choose to live no longer as tourists but as pilgrims, the Songs of Ascents combine all the cheerfulness of a travel song with the practicality of a guidebook and map. Their unpretentious brevity is excellently described by William Faulkner. ‘They are not monuments, but footprints. A monument only says, ‘At least I got this far,’ while a footprint says, ‘This is where I was when I moved again.’”*This book was an extreme help to my thinking when I first began ministry and it is the same today. The average disciple needs to been reinforced constantly by the Word and the Psalms is the place that many people throughout the ages have gone for that. For the Psalms teach us how to grow in worship, service, joy, community, humility as well as how to maneuver through suffering and affliction. These Songs of ascent were sung by the pilgrims as they went up to Jerusalem to worship reminding them not only of what God had done for them but enabling them to be refreshed and prepared to worship God in the way he prescribed. Now just to be alerted the version of Scripture that he uses is His own …what would become the Message Bible. But knowing that he was one of the leading linguists or the 20th Century one can overlook some liberties with his word choices. This one also has the epilogue where he reflects on ministry.  This is a wonderful look at God’s provision through the years of ministry.
9. **SURVIVING RELIGION 101-**by Michael J. Kruger (2021). This book came from a number of letters written to his daughter when she headed off to college. He gives her and now us a great apologetic told in the style of a father to his daughter. So while it is straight forward it is soft and sensitive enough to not hit her with too much at one time. Michal Kruger is perhaps one of the best Reformed apologists at this point in the 21st Century. I can’t image a college student, a pastor a housewife or an atheist that would benefit from this book. Even an atheist so that they might learn to talk intelligently about things, *“Many atheists, then, find themselves in a bit of an intellectual pickle. They have appealed to the reality of evil in the world as a basis to object to God’s existence. But without God’s existence, there’s no reason to think that evil (or good) is real. Curiously, this is precisely the dilemma that led C. S. Lewis to abandon his atheism and turn to Christianity. Lewis writes, ‘My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing the universe to when I called it unjust? . . . Of course, I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies.’”*The whole point of this book is that he knows that life in college will challenge and even try to breakdown a young person’s faith. He says to those questioning right now, *“Here’s the big point: you’re not going to be able to answer every objection to Christianity that you hear. And that’s okay. You just need to be ready for that. It’s not a reason to doubt your faith.”*So in this book he addresses many of the common objections that one will encounter on the campus as well as in the break room at work. *“Is it arrogant simply to believe what Jesus has said about himself? Not at all. It is his claim, not our claim. We are merely passing it along. The real objection, then, is about Jesus. Everything comes down to what people think about him, not what they think about us. Is he arrogant to claim that he is the only way to God? Well, that depends on the identity of Jesus. He didn’t claim to be a mere human or simply a prophet but rather the divine Son of God. And as such, he would certainly have the authority to tell us about how one goes to heaven.*He covers topics like the exclusivity of Christianity, Christian intolerance, homosexuality and other related sexual sins, hell, the problem with evil, science, miracles, and the reliability of the Bible. When talking about hell he states clearly, *“Apparently, Jesus agreed. If hell is the offensive doctrine people claim that it is, they must reckon with the fact that Jesus plainly embraced the doctrine of hell. For him it was a real place of eternal torment where God executes his justice (Matt. 13:42; Mark 9:43; Luke 16:23). Indeed, Jesus talked about hell much more than he ever talked about heaven.”*This book is for all who doubt in their faith walk to help show us up in those times when we begin to wander. Mark Twain once said, *“We all do no end of feeling, and we mistake it for thinking.”*So in this book he teaches how to think biblically and how to use the tools that are connected to that thinking.
10. **THE ART OF TURNING FROM SIN TO CHRIST FOR A JOYFUL CONSCIENCE**, by Kevin DeYoung (2017).  This is a interesting read about a subject I haven’t read a lot about…our conscience. He gives us to examples of a redeemed conscience interspersed with selfish ones.  Then he defines for us what exactly is our conscience and how important it is to have a clear conscience biblically speaking for our continued assurance and growth in Christ. He states, *“The importance of pursuing a clear conscience is so common in the New Testament that we may have overlooked this critical theme. Here are a few instances: So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man (****Acts 24:16).****The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (****1 Tim. 1:5****). They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (****1 Tim. 3:9).*** *See II Cor. 11:1–15). Paul replies, in effect, ‘If you want me to boast about something, I’ll boast in the testimony of my conscience, that I’m not like any of you!’* *Notice, Paul doesn’t over-apologize just to get the Corinthians off his back. He doesn’t say sorry for something he’s not sorry for. He doesn’t confess a sin when his conscience says he hasn’t sinned. Paul understood what our culture often does not: the fact that you are offended does not mean that I am automatically guilty. Of course, we want to be teachable and humble. We want to be open to correction. But just because someone else is bent out of shape doesn’t mean we’ve dented anything. Ultimately, God is the final judge, and we do not need to grovel for mercy when a good, functioning conscience has not condemned us for doing anything wrong. A clean conscience is a precious thing—for Paul and for us.”*This is a great little booklet help remind us of a topic we probably don’t think too much about…and we should.
11. **FOREVER:  Why You Can't Live Without It**, by Paul David Tripp (Copyright © 2011). Again, WOW! I talk about forever especially as I was going through the book of the Revelation of John but how little I considered the important of forever in my day to day! I have often contemplated on the text from **Ecclesiastes, 3:11- *“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity into man’s heart…”*** But until now I am sure that I did not consider this text appropriately.  This one thought, ***“…He has put eternity into man’s heart…”***ought to rule the thoughts of the believer and ought to scare “hell” out of those who do not believe. To this he says, *“No matter how wonderful the situations in our life are, no matter how beautiful our possessions are, no matter how exciting our experiences are, no matter how fulfilling our accomplishments are, and no matter how loving the people in our lives are, they will only satisfy us temporarily. They simply cannot carry our hope. How different would your life and mine be if we remembered that everything that exists in the created world is meant to be a finger pointing us toward the only place where hope can be found?...* *The story of the Bible doesn’t end with this world that we are all living in right now. What would seem like the last chapter, death, really isn’t the last chapter in God’s story. The Bible welcomes and requires you to face the inescapable reality of life after death. This present life is not all there is. There is a forever on the other side of this life. Eternity is not a mystical creation of overly spiritual people. Forever is a reality. It is the product of God’s plan and design.”*Considering these thoughts and many like them from the book I realize “wrong thinking” permeates our thinking. Oh, I already knew that but the wrong thinking that this book highlights  is a forgetfulness of the things most important that enables us to enjoy the blessings God has already given to us. We all have, as he says, “eternity amnesia.” He makes the case that most of us are clueless as to how our view of eternity completely shapes and defines the way we live. Wanting to know what life is all about pick up this book…(an “oldie but a goodie”). In fact, I would recommend that you pick up just about anything you can from Paul David Tripp, his insightfulness. his biblical scholarship and his writing style draws you in and you come away experiencing the wonderful even in the hardest things he has to say. An excellent resource to pick up read and then re-read slowly and meditatively.
12. **I, STARSHIP: Tin Can Combat: A Space Opera Book 2,**by Scott Bartlett (2024). Well…the next book in this series is not due out until Spring of 2025 and by then I will probably forget that I had any interest in this series at all…much to my discontent because I have liked everything else by Bartlett that I have read.  This just hasn’t held my attention. It doesn’t help that the main fighting force of the Fundament are cats but then they were meeting all kind of alien races that they never intended to meet on their trip. Sargent Henry Morgan’s character has had not much more development in this one than the last book and he is supposed to be the main character. As the Reconstituted Mind of the ship one would think that the writers would have developed him more to make your “feelings” for his continual humiliation by the captain something that would keep you going but alas no such luck. I’m not really sure that anything can be done on that point going forward. Henry hasn’t even “evolved” much as he was told that he would. He was supposed to be the heart of the ship but he is actually the butt of the jokes. In fact, until this latest all-out battle to save the Fundament…which is Scott at his best…he got little to no attention throughout this whole book.  He saves the day here as he did on Toliman and at the edge of the Milky Way but it is only now that any on, namely, the Captain has given him any accolades whatsoever. Are things going to get better for Henry or will the Captain return to normal once the wine of the celebration of the victory wears off. I may never know unless things are really slow next year and I am not involved in another …better…read.
13. **OMEGA DIRECTIVE (Omega Taskforce- prequel) ,**by G. J. Ogden (2024). Wow, this was rip-roaring prequel to a series already on place to give a bit of backstory. And what a backstory it is. We meet Commander Lucas Sterling along with Lt. Commander Ariel Gunn in the midst of a drill or is it something else?  Well, before they even realize it they are shooting at an alien enemy called the Sa’Nerra.  They have boarded the ship and jammed their neuro-implants in their brains. They have also found a way to “zombify” the crew to be able to “turn” them to become lethal weapons as they seek to take over the last dreadnaught of the Navy, *The Hammer*. As they go throughout the ship they pick up clues from one place or another and are able to put the picture together of how far they will need to go to re-claim the ship …even killing their own who have been “turned”. Lucas and Ariel speed to the CIC to gain control of the ship and once there, decisions have to be made within seconds which will effect Lucas for the rest of his life. Afterwards it seems that it was a test…a very deadly one…since no simulation could take into account the decisions that may have to be made concerning crewmen. Lucas has “passed” the test. He is not sure if that is a good thing or not.  He is made a Captain in the Omega Task Force.  He knws as the others who are a part of this elite force that tactics must change or they will lose the war…and that is just not an option. Excellent writing and flow.  I look forward to reading the series.
14. **THE COMBAT DIARIES: True Stories from the frontlines of World War II,**by Mike Guardia author and military historian (Copyright © The Estate of Charles Whiting, 1996. First published by Leo Cooper, 1996.) This book showcases 16 specific individuals along with their surrounding friends and family following them from their hometowns with specific aspirations to the war zone…Europe or Pacific. These brave individuals are from quartermaster troops to Army nurses to officers who are out front with their troops. From Omaha Beach in to Italy through France and at last into Germany we follow these heroes through hell and back again…to coin an Audie Murphy phrase. They tell their stories with such vivid detail even as much as 50 years later… their antics and their losses… until they finally come home. In these pages we are given information of what they accomplished after the war as well with many of them living into their 90’s. Such a generation as this may never be seen again…and so it is imperative that we read their stories so we don’t forget the sacrifice and the patriotism that drove these individual to be a part of the largest land and sea war in history…One among many willing to lay down their lives for a people they did not know to preserve the dignity and values of a country they loved.
15. **DEATH ON A DISTANT FRONTIER: A LOST VICTORY, 1944,**by Charles Whiting (a reconnaissance trooper in WWII turned military historian, 1996).  This book tells us mostly from a firsthand account of how egos and pride caused thousands of Allied deaths along the Siegfried Line as Patton and Patch and Bradley and Eisenhower fought over the best way to get into Germany…in the meantime hundreds died either by inaction or be impulse to do something “heroic”…which often meant without thought.  *““Little did these confident planners know that it would cost the US Army 130,000 casualties (79,000 battle and 51,000 non-battle)—more than the total for the whole Vietnam War—to fight the Battle of the West Wall over the next three months. By the time December arrived many of those planners would have lost their confidence and secretly believe that the Wall was impregnable.”*This account follows many moving part but 2 parts more than others as we see Patton’s Third Army get bogged down and the British SAS moving behind enemy lines seeking reconnaissance and try to stay at least one step ahead of the Gestapo. So much bravery in both od these camo’s along with Patch’s 36th Texas Division of the 7th Army which included interestingly enough the 442nd Nisei and all Japanese –American regiment. Not much is told about them except they were perhaps the most decorated group winning over 18,000 individual medals for bravery from a group of 9500 men. They were treated as cannon fodder because of how America thought of the Japanese back. Most of these men had come straight out of the internment (re-settlement) camps that sprung up almost overnight after Pearl Harbor. So much death ensued in these ranks from Patton’s and Patch’s Army…so much loss all according to this author out of personal pride and bigotry. Most admit today that the war in Europe could have been over months before it was id the main players had been on the same stage and weren’t vying for the upper hand against the other. Whether or not the war would have ended earlier, one thing seems to be above dispute… in all likelihood the Battle of the Bulge would not have happened because German troops would have been otherwise engaged. This is not just a tell all book about what could have been but a wonderful telling of frontline bravey of men who sought to follow orders and died and lived with the memories that things could have been different. Another piece of this book that was somewhat new to me was the among of French opposition to us removing the German’s from France. We see all the picture of flag waving when the American’s “liberated” a town but we don’t often read about how the Nazi sympathizer then gave away positions and plans to the Nazis ensuring the death of so many SAS and US. Army personnel. All in all an excellent read.
16. **ENEMY WITHIN (The Aternien Wars Book 2)** by G J Ogden (2023),  Things are not going well for the Union forces. The Aterniens have returned with a vengeance and while Commander Rose has gotten his old ship back…the last surviving Longsword vessel the *Galantine…*he needs a crew of post-humans to man her. In an era where the Union had pared down its technology and completely did away with post-human science he is desperate to find the last remaining crew members so that the Union can go on the offensive against an almost immortal enemy.  The action is non-stop as the master Commander seeks his lost crew.  Lost because of the prejudice that arose over post-humans in the last century. Even though they were the ones that saved the human race last time…old prejudices die hard…even if they had never met a post human before since most of them are at least 150 years older than they are…the post-humans are the  only ones to have fought the kind of battles they are attempting to fight now with both hands tied behind their backs. So Rose goes to Terra 6 to find his old master Operator.  He finds him but what he finds gives him pause. Not only have the Aterniens taken control of the planet and there is a bio-weapon set to exploded his old crew mate has begun a family and his children become his forst priority when his wife is brutally killed. So things are not going well. The question remains will rose be able to find enough of his old crew to be able to use the *Galantine* against the ever growing god-king?
17. **THE FALL OF NUMENOR: and Other Tales from the Second Age of Middle-earth,**by J.R. R. Tolkien, edited by Brian Sibley (2022).  This work complied by Christopher Tolkien before his death was picked up and finished by Brian Sibley. Tolkien himself called the 2nd Age, which this book is about, *“…the dark age and not very much of its history is (or need be told).”*But interestingly, he HAD written quite a lot about it as is revealed here in this book…but most LOTR fans only had glimpses from **The Lord of The Rings** and is *Appendices*until Christopher published **The Silmarillion**. With this book the fuller story began to unfurl and although much of the book’s content contained information about the First Age of Middle-earth it is also here that we first begun to read about the Fall of Numenor and the history of the Great Rings. But then Christopher revealed to all of us that there was even more material that his dad had written about the Second Age and it was published in the work entitled **Unfinished Tales of Numenor and Middle-earth**and then expanded into the 12 volume set **The History of Middle-earth.**Now adhering to the timeline of the “*Tale of Years”* in *The Appendices* to **The Lord of the Rings**Brian Sibley has brought together into this one comprehensive work this “newest” chronicle of the Second Age specifically dealing with Numenor and the foundering of the first 3 rings of Power. This is not just a compilation of these works but also additional works that were found after the other works were published have been added as well as excerpts from many of Tolkien’s personal letters to his friends concerning the “realities” of the second Age especially as they apply to the Numenorians.  Along with this work is also wonderful illustrations, by the most recognized Tolkien artisan, Alan Lee, which adds to the reading pleasure. And this book was a pleasure to read. Now for you are watching the TV show the *Rings of Power* you may not want to read this book or the Appendices of the LOTR since the TV show doesn’t seem to be concerned with the “timeline” established by Tolkien. Also, Tolkien’s works, this one included, reveal the true Galadriel and Celeborn as opposed to the ones in the show. A great read, right up there with the other original works. A must for all true LOTR fans!
18. **THE INCOMPARABLENESS OF GOD,**by George Swinnock, Puritan minister 1627-1673, (originally published in 1672, Monergism, Copyright © 2019).  Often “billed” as one of the easiest Puritans to read (think also of Richard Sibbes) he sought to take a “big” doctrine and break it down for the average Christian so that we might come away with a greater understanding and awe concerning the person of God. We have a tendency today as they did then to make images in our minds about God so that we can get a better handle on Him…but as Swinnock points out over and over again there is a reason why this is not only a breaking of the commandments it also weakens our faith and witness as we bring God down to our understanding so that we can be more comfortable. His great desire as so many of the men of that age was for his readers and hearers to come to know and enjoy that incomparable God for as he says, *“He who knows God aright is fully satisfied in Him, when he once drinks of the fountain of living waters he thirst no more after other lesser objects.”*This exposition of Ps. 89:6 *“For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD?”*looks closely at the incomparable being attributes, works, and word of God. He uses power illustrations, arguments and personal application to drive home to his readers the inescapable truth of the person of God that we say we claim. *“His incomparable eternity will be thine, and so long as he is God he will be thy God. When the sensualist's god is gone, thy God will remain; when the worldling's god fails him, thy God will not forsake thee; when all thine honours, riches, friends, relations, leave thee, thy God will abide with thee: 'This God is our God for ever and ever,' Ps. 48:14. Not for a day, or week, or month, or year, or age, but for ever and ever; not for a thousand years.”*One more thing; I always find it amazing that these authors know that unbelievers read their materials!! *“Reader, if thou livest without God, ponder, oh ponder in the midst of all thy gettings, what thou art losing, yea, what thou shalt lose, if thou dost not return, for ever and ever. Did the disciples weep and wail, that they should see the face of a good man no more on earth: 'Sorrowing most of all, for the words that he spake unto them, that they should see his face no more'? Acts 20:38. And dost thou think it will not fill thy heart with sorrow, and cut it with anguish, to hear the blessed God, the incomparable God, say to thee, Sinner, farewell, farewell for ever, thou shalt see my face no more for ever! Believe it, those words will sound more dolefully in thine.”*This book is as relevant today as it was at the end of the 17th Century.  I only wish more people would read the Puritans today. (At least, a couple for every contemporary author!) I leave you with his heart’s desire, *“Reader, if God be thus incomparably excellent, that he is excellency itself, the standard of all excellency, that angels hide their heads as ashamed of themselves before him, that he condescendeth to shew the least respect to his high and perfect host in heaven, that he is infinitely above all their blessings and praises, all their conceptions and apprehensions, what praise, what honour, what glory shouldst thou give to this God! Though thou art unable to give him all the glory that is due to his name, yea, the thousand thousandth part thereof, yet do thou give him all the glory thy mind, will, heart, affections, all thy faculties united together, and enlarged to the utmost, can possibly give him. Say to thy soul,****'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me praise his holy name,' Ps. 103:1****.”*
19. **OF ARMING A CHRISTIAN SOLDIER: or A Christian’s Spiritual Furniture to Keep Him safe from All the assaults of Satan,**by William Gouge (Originally published in 1619, Copyright Monergism Books  © 2024) This first treatise on this subject for which he writes here is based on his exposition of two texts, **James 4:7- *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*and Eph. 6:10-21-*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and shaving put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”***But for his part he bases the call to resist the devil with the how we can resist him in the Ephesians passage. It seems that the people then like the people today needed to be convinced as to how much of an adversary the devil is, *“In many respects, the Devil may be accounted most monstrously wicked. Because he was the first author of wickedness: that which Christ says of one particular branch of wickedness may be applied to the general; he is the father of wickedness, and in that respect is said to be a murderer from the beginning.”*But at the same time we must remember that the devil is still under God’s ultimate control, *“God's restraint on Satan is evident through several biblical instances, from limiting the Serpent's damage to bruising the heel rather than crushing the head, to specific examples where Satan's influence is clearly checked or permitted by God, such as in the cases of Saul, Ahab, and notably, Job, where Satan's actions are expressly limited to what God allows. Objection: Some argue that Satan is now "loosed" and enjoys greater freedom to enact his will. Answer: This perceived loosening is relative, akin to extending a chained dog's leash rather than an absolute freedom. God's limitations on the devil serve to distinguish His infinity of power over all.”*Central to his argument is this fact of where our strength comes from to resist…as we ae equip with the Lord’s divine armor…an armor characterized be completeness and divinity, of grace and virtues, symbolized by pieces of military gear that will ensue the believers ability to stand against the devils assaults if that be God’s will. And he ends with this exhortation, *“In all conflicts, have an eye to this end; though your enemies be many and fierce, yet fear not, you shall stand when they shall flee. Patiently wait, and faint not. ‘He that believeth shall not make haste” for God, who alone can end the fight, stands by: he orders all the assaults, for number, measure, kind, continuance, and every other circumstance; and knows when and how to determine all. Therefore, courageously withstand your enemies, that you may victoriously stand. For to give no place to the devil is to overcome the devil.”* This is one of the most comprehensive expositions of the whole armor of God!The believer needs to always know and trust in what God has provided that we may stand! To this end he wrote.

1. **PERSONAL FREINDSHIPS of JESUS,** by J. R. Miller (originaly written 1897, republished November 28, 2008, Most recently updated: January 4, 2021,THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PROJECT). I normally like Miller’s stuff. In fact, up till this one I have liked them all. It is not that this is theologically incorrect but that he takes such liberties beyond what the scriptures tell us about Jesus’ friends. I think that “friend” is a hard word for us to get our minds around when it comes to our Lord. So, I think, that is the reason he takes such liberties so that we can get a “feel” for the depth of true friends Jesus had. But this is speculation as to his motives since he doesn’t speak to the reason for such liberties. That is a lot of good information in this book about what God expects from us as friends and from the “friends” that we befriend. *“There was a precept in the Mosaic law which at first seems to be the same as that which Jesus gave, but it was not the same. It read,****"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."****As ‘thyself’ was the standard. Men were to love themselves, and then love their neighbors as themselves. That was as far as the old commandment went. But the new commandment is altogether different.****‘As I have loved you"****is its measure.* *It was a new pattern of love, not a new commandment actually, that Jesus introduced. He forgot himself altogether, denied himself, never saved his own life, never hesitated at any line or limit of service, of cost or sacrifice, in loving. He emptied himself, kept nothing back, spared not his own life. Thus the standard of friendship which Jesus set for his followers was indeed new. Instead of****‘Love thy neighbor as thyself,’****it was****‘Love as Jesus loved’****and he loved unto the uttermost. The new ideal of love which Jesus came to introduce among men was the love of God shed abroad in human hearts.****"As I have loved you, that ye also love one another"****was the new requirement****.”***But he also wants us to reflect on the purposes of our Lord, *“Men must be brought back into loyalty to God. Jesus astonishes us by the tremendous claims and demands he makes. He says that men must come unto him if they would find rest; that they must believe on him if they would have everlasting life; that they must love him more than any human friend; that they must obey him with absolute, unquestioning obedience; that they must follow him as the supreme and only guide of their life, committing all their present and eternal interests into his hands. In a word, he puts himself deliberately into the place of God, demanding for himself all that God demands, and then promising to those who accept him all the blessings that God promises to his children. The aim of true friendship anywhere is not to make life easy for one's friend, but to make something of the friend. That is God's method. He does not hurry to take away every burden under which he sees us bending. He does not instantly answer our prayer for relief, when we begin to cry to him about the difficulty we have, or the trial we are facing, or the sacrifice we are making. He does not spare us hardship, loss, or pain. He wants not to make things easy for us, but to make something of us. We grow under burdens. It is poor, mistaken fathering or mothering that thinks only of saving a child from hard tasks or severe discipline. It is weak friendship that seeks only pleasure and indulgence for a loved one. "The chief want in life is somebody who shall make us do the best we can." Jesus was the truest of friends. He never tried to make the burden light, the path smooth, the struggle easy. He wished to make men of his apostles,—men who could stand up and face the world; men whose character would reflect the beauty of holiness.*Then he branches out to specific people like His mother, John the Baptist, His disciples; specifically Peter and Thomas, Mary and Martha, Nicodemus and Joseph and Arimathea.  Then he shares with how Jesus revealed His friendship after His resurrection. All in all it is a worthy read…just fact check so as not to get to caught up in the fluff. I believe he is sincere in seeking for us to get the idea…just think he could have done this one better.

1. **LANCE,(Conscript Book 3),**by Scott Bartlett (2024). This was an absolute page turner. I couldn’t wait to get to the next chapter as I maneuvered through this book. Unlike the **I, STARSHIP** books (at least so far) the development of Po Abbato into the leader his squad needs him to be and the man that he needs for him to be grows with each page. The intersection of other charcaters like Navarro, Paisley and Zheng along with the Sergeants that he admires all grow together into a unit even one that is a bit dysfunctional…but then we are talking about Marines…Jarheads. Gunny Emery is the one he has been with since basic and he is full of helpful information, *“War is a disaster, Abbato. Not just this war—any war. It’s always a complete disaster. Anyone who gets themselves involved in a war can expect it to be the messiest, most psychologically damaging thing they’ll ever do in their lives. And you’re not done yet. So, expect to carry some baggage with you, and the more you fight, the more you can expect to accumulate. I’m not saying it’s right, and I know this probably doesn’t come as much of a comfort. But it’s also the reality.’ ‘Yeah. I get it, Gunny.” He swallowed around the hard lump that had suddenly formed in his throat.”*I love the way the Amazon review begins, *“The planet Nibiru wants them all dead. All of them.”*They all have been “trapped” here for a while. But they are marines so you almost have to feel sorry for the insurgents. The Marines may be surrounded with no way off the planet but with good leadership they are convinced they are invisible. People will die…but they die with a purpose rather than living with none. They get a few breaks along the way…the “entire” planet doesn’t want them dead…just most of it! Lol! But they aren’t just battling insurgents on this world.  They are working with someone. Some speculate the Emplor but there is too much to indicate that the Angels are in play as well.  Po hasn’t figured it out yet, but as a lowly PVC it is, after all above his pat grade…and yet he can’t shake that the pieces are coming together. In the meantime they have a mission and Echo Company is the tip of the spear again...find and capture or kill the leader of the insurgents…cut off the head of the snake and hopefully that will deal with a big part of the equation.  We find our Marines fighting their way through the deepest of caverns and in the deepest of oceans…great stuff.  Po’s Emplor friend (or is he) shows up less and less but he is still around mostly to confuse Po, it seems. There is some many moving parts here…like what’s up with Paisley? And then there is Navarro.  Do they get their man..Nibiruian?
2. **PRAYING WITH JESUS, Getting to the Heart of the Lord’s Prayer,**by Adriel Sanchez (New Growth Press, 2024). So why is it that we don’t prayer as we should? Why is it that it is not as much of a priority as it should be? Sanchez believes some of it is our ignorance hence the need for “another” exposition of the Lord’s Prayer. But also because we have become complacent since our view of God is sooooo limited. Michael Horton writes the Forward to this book and he has some of the same angst. He says, *“’I’m not feeling it,’ my kids say sometimes. When it comes to prayer, I’ve had those moments too. I know that God speaks to me through his Word and that I commune with him in prayer. I also know that communication is the heart of any relationship. It would be strange to pretend a loved one isn’t actually living with you except when you’re ‘feeling it.’ Another thing I know is that if I only prayed when I felt like it, I’d miss out on some of the best conversations. But it’s easier sometimes to let the moment pass, like the morning jog or that long-overdue call to a close friend. There’s a difference, however, between knowing what’s important, doing it, and feeling it. That’s where this book on prayer can help.”* Also, it seems we do not fully grasp what being in God’s presence actually means hence he has a whole chapter on the posture of prayer and the time we should pray in the day…both spiritually and physically. These chapters along with the heart of prayer are the absolute gems of this book. While I do not come down so legalistically on particular postures his insight in these first 3 chapters are extremely thought provoking. *““Whenever you bow down, kneel, or raise your hands to the Lord, you’re praying with your body. You’re outwardly expressing what you also hope is the attitude of your heart. Prostrating our body recalls the death our sin deserves, kneeling the sovereignty of our Savior, standing the vigilance that is to accompany soldiers ready for battle, and raising hands remind us that we’re in need of God’s provision even as we offer him ourselves. There’s no reason to be legalistic about these prayer postures, but we also shouldn’t discount them. Sometimes in the spiritual life, the movement of our body precedes the movement of our heart.”*He also did something that is extremely helpful and that is to tap into the Church fathers and Puritan pastors of the past to support his overall message,*“Let us not then make our prayer by the gesture of our body, not by the loudness of our voice, but by the earnestness of our mind: neither with noise and clamor and for display, so as even to disturb those that are near us, but with all modesty, and with contrition in the mind, and with inward tears . . . For not unto men art thou praying, but to God, who is everywhere present, who hears even before the voice, who knows the secrets of the mind. If thou so pray, great is the reward thou shalt receive.—John Chrysostom, fourth-century archbishop of Constantinople”*Even once we get into the main reason for this book…The Lord’s Prayer… we still encounter beleivers from the past, *“Our Father in Heaven… Thus at the beginning of this prayer we are directed to honor the Trinity as the creative cause of our coming into existence. Further, we are also taught to speak to ourselves of the grace of adoption, since we are worthy to call Father by grace the one who is our Creator by nature.* *This means that every time you say Our Father, you should have two things at the forefront of your mind: First, you have the deep conviction that you are God’s beloved son, or daughter, his very own rescued worshipper. Second, you cultivate an awareness of the benefits that belong to you as one adopted by grace.—Maximus the Confessor, seventh-century Christian monk.”*Jesus expects that we will be a praying people…that we will want to converse with Him on a regular basis for He is our most intimate savior and friend. It was written into the laws and practices since the beginning so that we see by the time the OT ends tht it was the assumed practice, *“God spoke through the prophet Malachi about the incense offered:****‘For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts’ (Malachi 1: 11).”*** May the readers of this book find the challenge to once again get into regular conversation with the One who loves us most and best.
3. **WAIT AND HOPE, Puritan Wisdom for Joyful Suffering,**by Jacob Tanner (2024 from Reformation Heritage Books). Mr. Tanner is a Baptist and he is Calvinistic but he is NOT Reformed. However, after getting that off my chest…of there is one more thing…he only uses the KJV in his biblical references. Now, after getting that off my chest he does a masterful job of intertwining biblical wisdom and Puritan wisdom. The Puritans in some way were “Rock Stars” when it came to how to suffer for Christ. *“Because Bunyan knew the grace of God in an extraordinary way, he was able to pen these encouraging words of Christ’s power to save: “Sinner, thou thinkest that because of thy sins and infirmities I cannot save thy soul, but behold My Son is by Me, and upon Him I look and not on thee, and will deal with thee according as I am pleased with Him.”*Oh, they were far from perfect, just like us, but they KNEW suffering…and they taught constantly on the subject and the way God uses it to grow us, strengthen us, humble us, and to overall love us. He explains the book with this, *“If we wish to learn how to wait and hope in such a way that God would be glorified, even through our suffering, then we must look to the testimony of Scripture and the lives of past saints. We must remember that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, and if we ignore church history, we do so to our own peril. Strong saints are often well read in church history. And when it comes to enduring suffering and hoping in the triumph of Christ, perhaps there is no better place to turn to in the pages of church history than the lives and teachings of the Puritans.”*We get so caught up in the reason for suffering and the desire to get rid of it we often find ourselves selfishly angry that people around us have found us out and then we don’t want to admit it*. “Charles Spurgeon, preaching on how David was persecuted by his wife Michal, who famously said, ‘Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him. For you are worse than he thinks you to be. If he charges you falsely on some point, yet be satisfied, for if he knew you better he might change the accusation and you would be no gainer by the correction. If you have your moral portrait painted and it is ugly, be satisfied. For it only needs a few blacker touches and it would be still nearer the truth.’”*The great thing about the Puritans are their bluntness when it comes to the things that we should know; like this quote from Jonathan Edwards, “The world is all the hell that ever a true Christian is to endure, and it is all the heaven that unbelievers shall ever enjoy.” Now to a modern day Puritan, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *“It is not a lack of promises on God’s behalf that cause us to become downcast in spirit, but a lack of faith. The ultimate cause of all spiritual depression is unbelief. So, the most important starting point for the one going through ‘the dark night of the soul’ is with the simple prayer, ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’”*I can’t end this review any better than with his own words, *““Wait and hope. These two words really do summarize much of the Christian life, do they not? No matter the trial we discuss, these words will apply. When the dark night of the soul comes and we are waiting, sometimes with bated breath and exhausted patience, for joy to come anew in the morning, it can feel an eternity. Yet it is often the case that in such instances of waiting and hoping, we are rather surprised to find that joy has suddenly come to us in the most extraordinary of ways. While looking to Christ is important here, there may be no greater way to combat spiritual depression than with God’s Word. We need to utilize the Scriptures by studying and mediating on them. We need to apply them to our lives and live by them. But during combat against spiritual depression, should it be so strange to find joy and mirth swelling in our hearts? Surely,”*
4. **HAL MOORE: A Soldier Once…and Always,**by Mike Guardia (2013). This is one of the best biographies I have read in sometime. Hal Moore was well known in the U.S. Army but not so well known by the general public until the book **We Were Soldiers once…and Young**came out and then came the movie starring Mel Gibson who played the role of Lt. Col. Hal Moore at the beginning of the Vietnam War when his air cavalry landed in Ia Drang and decimated a battalion on North Vietnamese with less than 500 men in 3 days. This book and movie perhaps more than any other gave us a good look at the horrors of war but also they went a long way in helping the country heal from this war that ended in disgrace for the US. This book is a great book on leadership as well…how to maintain disciple and to prepare men for the toughest challenges of their lives. This book catalogues Moore’s growth from the hills of Kentucky through West Point to his first combat duty in Korea. From peacekeeping to training one of the most powerful new forces ever preparing them for war and …for life. The 7th Cavalry Air Mobile Units were born under his leadership and command but the training and inspiration led to more than a good fighting force but to men who sought to live up to a standard that had enabled our country to prosper…one that had been wavering in the years since WWII. But even after the war it catalogues Moore’s contribution to the Army during the early days of the all-volunteer force that struggled to be effective and produce a fighting force that was prepared with a purpose to defend. Moore was a war-fighter to be sure…but he was family man and a leader of men. The book also correct some of the “Hollywood” addition to the movie. Hal’s wife, Julie, was adamant that the true stories be told especially concerning the notifications of the spouses of their deceased husbands…but overall both of them were pleased with how the movie portrayed the men and the sacrifice that they gave for one another and for a war that they knew little of its significance. Lt. General Moore went home to be with the Lord February of 2017 at the ripe age of 94. And since the country was so set on renaming Army posts… Ft. Benning, Ga became Fort Moore after the beloved and respected general…actually an apt change for a 20th Century hero.
5. **PATTON’S PRAYER: a True Story of Courage, Faith and Victory in World War II,**by Alex Kershaw (2024). I always “enjoy” Alex’s works.  For he thoroughly enjoys writing them. I say “enjoy” because he is committed to telling the story of the average service man all the way up to the generals in charge like here with Patton and his cohorts. He “enjoys” enabling the people that were there to speak…rather than giving way to much conjecture as another author, I have recently read, has a tendency to do especially with people he doesn’t have much respect for…like Gen. Patton. (Charles Whiting in the book, **DEATH ON A DISTANT FRONTIER: A LOST VICTORY, 1944**, speaks of similar events but his dislike for Patton is clear.)  Kershaw always seeks truth rather than opinion. This comes out in his writing because he backs it up with so many firsthand accounts from people living at the time and now dead…along with their papers and letters. Now while there are many other voices in this book the man story is about Patton and the Battle of the Bulge and while this is a very “familiar” story Kershaw brings things to this re-telling that are new and vibrant. Rather than just rehashing the battle this story develops around the Prayer for Christmas 1944 in the midst of the rain and the snow and the sluggish winter.*“’This is General Patton,’ announced the Third Army commander. ‘Do you have a good prayer for weather? We must do something about those rains if we are to win the war.’ This was, of course, a highly unusual request, even from a character as unpredictable and quixotic as Patton. Ch. O’Neill told Patton he would look for a suitable prayer. He couldn’t find one, so he created his own, jotting it down on a card:* ***Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations.****O’Neill added a Christmas prayer to the troops for good measure, hoping it would also find favor with Patton. To each officer and soldier in the Third United States Army, I Wish a Merry Christmas. I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We march in our might to complete victory. May God’s blessings rest upon each of you on this Christmas Day. G.S. Patton, Jr, Lieutenant General, Commanding, Third United States Army.”*Much is said about Patton’s faith through the years. He was a profane man who often talked as if he was the reincarnated Alexander the Great, but he was also very spiritual in a biblical faith… but very practical way, *“Chaplain, I am a strong believer in Prayer. There are three ways that men get what they want—by planning, by working, and by praying. Any great military operation takes careful planning, or thinking. Then you must have well-trained troops to carry it out: that’s working. But between the plan and the operation there is always an unknown. That unknown spells defeat or victory, success or failure. Up to now, in the Third Army, God has been very good to us. We have never retreated; we have suffered no defeats. . . . This is because a lot of people back home are praying for us.”* Gen. Patton was a master in strategy and force. The Germans feared him and what he was able to do with the Third Army while he had them. With inferior equipment and numbers he still went on the offensive and almost always won. *“Patton wrote to his son, George, later that day: “Leadership . . . is the thing that wins battles. I have it—but I’ll be damned if I can define it. Probably it consists in knowing what you want to do and then doing it and getting mad if anyone steps in the way. If we take the generally accepted definition of bravery as a quality which knows not fear, I have never seen a brave man. All men are frightened. The courageous man is the man who forces himself, in spite of his fear, to carry on. Discipline, pride, self-respect, self-confidence, and the love of glory are* *attributes which will make a man courageous even when he is afraid”* A great re-telling of a very important time and person.
6. **FORWARD SHIELD (Galaxy Bridge book 6),**by Daniel Gibbs and Stave Rzasa (2024). Mateo is on the Kin Home (world/spaceship) seeking peace with the diabolical Kin and with the help of a not so mysterious “stranger” that has shown up throughout this series and other Mateo seems to be making head way…or is he. Back at the ARCH the Kin have sought to attacked with many of their conscripts to destroy the “biologicals” in this Galaxy and in the next. Somehow they are “sneaking” past the scanners and seemingly they have very little in the way of detecting them at this point so the station is effectively locked down leading to the possibility of revolt from the stations patrons and civilian population not knowing that they are being pawns in the League of Sol’s and the King’s ultimate plans. We will find out where the Kin come from and that they were supposed to be part of the solution to the nanite invasion but most of them do not want to hear it and begin another rampage. Well…Mateo and the crew of the *Oxford*along with Mateo’s wife, Dr. Esme Larra have a weapon that they are not sure will work while at the same time Mateo and waters seem to be making headway…until they aren’t.  Will the weapon work?  Is it ethical to use such a weapon? Will there be a lasting peace? Will we ever see the Lion of Judah again…Yes! But we have to wait to find out more. Possibly next year at this point…AWWW… Come on! LOL!
7. **DAILY MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS**, by John Bradford (1510-1555, an English Reformer, charged with stirring up a mob which was code for meeting as a church that wasn’t Roman Catholic per Queen Mary’s definition, who was burned at the stake July, 1555. Most of his works were written while incarcerated and published after his death…digitally reproduced 2024 for Monergism).  The title actually ought to be Prayers and Meditations for he gives us prayers to pray throughout our day from when you awake, when you arise, when you dress yourself, when you go out the doors, journeying, mealtime and coming home and preparing for bed…before giving us his meditations. The Puritans believed wholeheartedly in prayer as a means of grace. The Roman Catholics taught the necessity of prayer for their salvation but the Puritans, for our edification and the glory of God. He wrote these prayers and short meditations to supersede the Roman Catholic prayer books on similar subjects. Some of them are “hard” and remind us today of things we don’t often pray for…if we die before we return home, if we die after we lay down to sleep…thanking God for even the simplest of porridge as a means of God’s covenant grace. His meditations bring to life many of the prayers so that we can understand his thinking. While he offs up many prayers perhaps the last one is a good example of how he encouraged the people to pray in his day; *“,O Lord God Almighty, most dear Father of heaven, for all thy mercies and loving kindness showed unto us, in that it has pleased thy gracious goodness freely and of thine own accord to elect and choose us to salvation before the beginning of the world. And the like continual thanks be given to thee for creating us after thine own image; for redeeming us with the precious blood of thy dear son, when we were utterly lost; for sanctifying us with thy Holy Spirit in the revelation and knowledge of thy holy word; for helping and succouring us in all our needs and necessities; for saving us from all dangers of body and soul; for comforting us so fatherly in all our tribulations and persecutions; for sparing us so long, and giving us so large a time for repentance. These benefits, O most merciful Father, like as we acknowledge to have received them of thy only goodness, even so we beseech thee, for thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, to grant us always thy Holy Spirit, whereby we may continually grow in thankfulness towards thee, and our neighbors, for thy sake. Suffer us not, dearest Father, to receive thy word any more in vain; but grant us always the assistance of thy grace and Holy Spirit, that in heart, word, and deed we may sanctify and worship thy holy name. Help to amplify and increase thy kingdom, that whatsoever thou sends we may be heartily well content with thy good pleasure and will. Let us not lack that, O Father, without which we cannot serve thee, but bless thou so all the works of our hands, that we may have sufficient, and not be chargeable but rather helpful unto others. Be merciful, O Lord, to our offences, and, seeing our debt is great, which thou hast forgiven us in Jesus Christ, make us to love thee and our neighbours so much the more. Be thou our Father, our Captain, and Defender in all temptations; hold thou us by thy merciful hands, that we may be delivered from all inconveniences, and end our lives in the sanctifying and honour of thy holy name. Let thy mighty hand and outstretched arm, O Lord, still be our defence; thy mercy and loving kindness in Jesus Christ thy dear Son our salvation; thy true and holy word our instruction; thy grace and Holy Spirit our comfort and consolation unto the end and in the end through Jesus Christ our Lord and only Saviour. Amen.*
8. **PLANET KILLER (The Aternien Wars Book 3),**By G.J. Ogden (2023). The Aterniens have a new weapon system that seems unstoppable. A virus the kills…eradicates whole planets of people…Terra 5,6 and 7 are gone. It doesn’t affect the post-humans like Carter but everyone else in a matter of hours. In the fight against this weapon and the continual incursion Carter has branched out looking for more of his old crew Master Engineer Kendra has gotten the *Galantine* back up to snuff as well as can be expected in a time that has no more specs on the *Longswords* but things aren’t quite right and it turns out the an Aterniens have placed spies in the ranks and they even have sabotaged the Galantine to try and steal her…not once but twice. Along the way they have found Master Navigator Amaya but getting her back to the ship was anything other than a walk in the park. Along the way Rose has to do away with many of the Immortals and Damien Morrow keeps showing up but always slipping away.  That is the problem Rose is always on the offense even when he wins a battle it feels as if it was given to him…except his on-going battle with one Overseer that is reborn with the sole purpose of killing the Master Commander.  Well, now things have just gone south once again.  Carina is in a stasis chamber holding on to life…the battle does not go well. Carter needs a new plan and he things he has one but will the admiral go along with it?  Will he be able to get his plan going in time to save Carina and the Union? Next one up **COUNTER ACTION**.
9. **ON PRAYER: IN MODERN UPDATED ENGLISH,**by John Calvin (published by Modern Puritans, August 2024 Modern Puritans is a publishing house with a stated goal to power a modern-day reformation by exposing people to the past.) This is taken and adapted into more modern English from the 3rd book, chapter 20 of **The Institutes of the Christian Religion**by John Calvin. This is Calvin’s in depth treatise on the purpose and place of prayer for the individual Christian as well as Christians corporately. Prayer being the primary means by which Christians commune and communicate with our God He takes us on an almost exhaustive trek concerning prayer and its power in the world today. Calvin insists that prayer is not a ritualistic practice but an intimate conversation with our God. He states*, “It’s not so much for His benefit as it is for ours. He wants us to honor Him by acknowledging that everything we desire or find useful comes from Him. But even this act of honoring Him benefits us. The holy patriarchs, the more they recognized God's mercies, felt a stronger urge to pray. Take Elijah, for example. He was sure of God's plan and confidently promised rain to Ahab, yet he still prayed earnestly and sent his servant seven times to check (1 Kings 18: 42). It wasn’t because he doubted God’s promise, but because he knew it was his duty to present his desires to God, to keep his faith active and alive.”*Calvin gives his readers many sections for the Psalms, *“The Psalmist reminds us that the prayers of the Church are never in vain because God always provides his people with reasons for a song of joy. But although the shadows of the law have ceased, yet because God was pleased by this ordinance to foster the unity of the faith among us also, there can be no doubt that the same promise belongs to us—a promise which Christ endorsed with his own words, and which Paul declares to be perpetually in force.”*This particular volume also has at the end Calvin treatise on the Lord’s Prayer which is also from the Institutes 3rd book, chapter 20. Calvin reinforces the teaching of this being OUR model for a righteous prayer and with it he answers questions about how Christians should pray. I find these breakout books like this to be very helpful in that it takes out of the bigger body of works enabling the student to be more focused on the subject at hand.
10. **OUR GOD,**Octavius Winslow (originally 1870, Monergism digitally 2011).  This book is an exposition by the author of ***"For this God is OUR GOD for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end."*Psalm 48:14.** This exposition deals with 10 of the attributes and character traits of our God as part of His very essence for which we need to remember especially when we are questioning and struggling in our faith. These define who God is and what He does, like he is the God of holiness, God of love, the God of hope, the God of God patience, the God of love, the God of Comfort. The God of Bethel, Peace, light and forever. This book focuses upon the reality that our Triune Godhead is not a remote impersonal deity, but rather: the one and only Sovereign God of the universe who is at the same time the personal God of those elect whom He has redeemed. The book will certainly deepen the faith of the reader. **Our God** may well be Octavius Winslow's very best book, for what better subject can a believer desire to meditate on than the character of the triune God whom he loves, worships and fears? *“This COVENANT GOD is our God. God has ever been a covenant God to His Church. In the everlasting covenant, He bound Himself to honor the law by His obedience, and to satisfy justice by His death, and so make it righteous and honorable in God to hold out His hand of patience all the day long to a sinful and gainsaying race. Finding in the person of Christ a divine dignity equal to the claims of His moral government, in His obedience a full honoring of the law, and in His sufferings and death a full satisfaction to justice, God could stand upon the Mount, and, while the thunder of His power rolled, and the lightning of His justice flashed, exclaim, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,’- and thus it became righteous and honorable in God, to hold out His hand all the day long to a sinful and gainsaying race.”*The only issue I have with Winslow’s works is that after quoting and referencing the passage he is working on he doesn’t reference the address of the text that he uses to illustrate or substantiate what he has just said, thus requiring a lot of work in searching out the passages some of which are very obscure but fit. (which may be another of his purposes for his readers.) This work keeps us intently moving forward as we accumulate more and more insight on **OUR GOD.**
11. **FIRE IN THE HOLE: Tales of Combat with the 1st Engineering Battalion in Vietnam,**BY Mike Guardia (2023).  I picked up another of his books because I was so impressed with his handling of the “biography” of Hal Moore in **HAL MOORE: A Soldier Once…and Always.**This book is particularly following Charlie Company of the 1st engineering battalion. But even more so 4 men from this company Dan Crowley, Larry Blair, Chuck Humphrey and Jay Franz. The book is written as a no-holds barred account of this particular engineering company in Vietnam. The 1st Engineer Battalion was among the first Army combat units deployed to Vietnam just after the Marines who landed first as a combat force. This book basically covers the years of 1965-66 for these men even though we will see both their pre-war and post-war life’s as well. He says from the book, *“In a war marked by controversy and political unrest, Vietnam remains a divisive topic in American history. The war began as an advisory mission to the South Vietnamese government, hoping to roll back the tide of Communism and keep Indochina within the folds of the Free World. However, poor intelligence, unclear objectives, a hostile American public, and a disaffected news media turned the ‘noble endeavor’ of Vietnam into a national nightmare.”* And of course, for those who lived during this time and were old enough to understand so much of this, the “noble endeavor” revealed what happens when politicians run a war even worse than Korea. They should have learned from their mistakes but they only compounded them. This book shows some of that as well as one of the men is in command…so we see “both side” if you will… command and the non-com. This one falls right in line with many Vietnam books, with the exception of the Hal Moore book, with too much information trying to make a bad war look better than iit was...for from one whose father was in both Korea and Vietnam as a non-com…there was nothing good about this war. Any way, given this book, I think I will go back to WWII books for a while. Still the best book I have read concerning what went on in Vietnam and it really only focused on 2 battles in November 1965 is **WE WERE SOLDIERS ONCE AND YOUNG,**by lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore and Joseph Galloway.
12. **THE CHRISTIAN’S DAILY PRACTICE OF PIETY or ,**by Richard Alleine (1611-1681, originally published after his death in 1698, Monergism and Aaron Sturgill  2024) This was a series of teaching in the 1670’s that as a pastor he sought to help his people with. Focusing on daily piety around the Scriptures rather than the prayers and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England. It is filled with practical, theological and spiritual aids for his families that would still be of aid to us today. I love this opening live when dealing with the topic of the daily practice of piety, *“Be sure to get God, and the things of God next to your heart when you awake. God, the world and Satan with his suggestions knocks to get in first. Open your heart first to God, if Satan and the world hath possession, out them speedily, and let your meditation on God be sweet.* *Spend your first thoughts on him, and your eternal condition, whose thou shall be at the opening of the graves, and the rising of the Dead. Think also you are one night nearer heaven or hell; resolve to do something* *towards your salvation that day in mortifying some sin, and getting nearer to Christ. 2. Before you entertain the world, get more solemnly to God, lift up your heart unto him, first in thanksgiving for the bed blessing, your renewed life and strength, and then pour out your soul in supplication to him for his grace to enable you in your duties, to resist the temptations, and to be kept from the evils of that day, enlarge yourself, as time and place will permit, read withal some potion of Scripture if you can.”*He is very practical in his teaching to the point of being very specific, *“Be careful all the day long of your discourse, for you must give an account of every idle word, and by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Let all your speeches be serious holy, inoffensive, and edifying. Weigh beforehand what honor your discourse will bring to God, what good to your friend, what good or hurt to your own soul. Use not any foolish jesting, or taunting reproachful speeches. Spend not many words in your buying and selling, abhor all lies, tales, idle stories, wanton songs, and do not curse nor swear, or use the name of God vainly. Labor to add something to every grace each day of your life, and to take something from your sin. Build up your knowledge in faith, love, joy, and fear daily; lay consideration to the root of all your graces to quicken them. Be as careful of the graces of your soul.”*He goes on to give actual prayers for the morning family time as well as meal time along with the practical and biblical approaches to buying commodities and selling commodities, in each focusing on the integrity of the believer towards other so they can see our godliness and give glory to God.
13. **COUNTER ACTION(The Aternien Wars Book 4),**By G.J. Ogden (2023). The Master Commander and his crew Master Engineer Kendra and Master Navigator Amaya have decide to take the battle to the Aterniens by searching out and finding the only person that can help if he is still alive. Nathan Clynes was the man who created all of the post-humans for the Union along with the ***Longswords.***If they can find him and perhaps another shipmate or 2 they could take the battle to them with a virus that might finally and effectively annihilate the Aterniens. Annihilation of a species is hard for some to swallow but Master Commander Rose knows that the only way to stop the Aterniens is their ultimate demise. Along the way they have many battles and missions that put them in harm’s way as they try to search and one of these mission has put Major Carina Larsen, the *Galantine’s* XO, in mortal danger as she has been affected by the virus that the Aterniens are spreading throughout the galaxy to exterminate the biologicals. So the need to find Nathan is even heighten now to seek a cure for Carina. Just as they are completing one mission another calls as they have received a message from Rose’s Master at Arms on a station light years away and in searching for him they uncover a plot by the Aterniens to do away with Terra Prime/Earth. The action is great. And the tension is even greater to see what the outcomes of so many scenarios going on at once. On to the next book **BATTLE ATERNUS**.
14. **WILLIAM WALLACE: A Life from Beginning to End,**by Hourly History (2019). This book is a short and concise look at the man and the myth…Sir William Wallace. In short form it seeks to separate the man and the myth and focus solely on a man who was larger than life (6’ 7”) in more ways than one. He was the proud Scott that stunted the invasion of Scotland by a greedy England and King...but also one Scott unwilling to give up his people for any cost as many of the Scottish nobles were for a time. The book covers his formative years to his famous victory at Stirling Bridge to his famous defeat at Falkirk to his demise in London in 1305. Wallace’s story is incomplete because like so many larger than life people of this era writings weren’t available of all that they did.This book however hits the high points tying the story and the truth together to give us adequate picture of the man, patriot and unyielding resistor for the sake of his country. Always defiant Wallace was known to have said, *“I can not be a traitor, for I owe him no allegiance. He is not my Sovereign; he never received my homage; and whilst life is in this persecuted body, he never shall receive it.”* Although the English would win in the moment and Edward I would receive certain satisfaction… William Wallace’s legacy lives on to this day. Hourly History seeks to be as concise as possible without detracting from the actual history. I have another one on **Robert the Bruce**. So far so good on accuracy.
15. **A JOURNEY IN PRAYER,**by Aaron Sturgill (2024).  It seems that many people are writing out books of prayers these days. Some are fashioning them after the valley of Vision like Tim Challies’ new book **Pilgrim Prayers**or even one focused exclusively on mothers, **Honest Prayers for Mama Bears** (this is not an endorsement of either book just a sampling of what has come out recently.)  In this case the author was working on a dissertation for a doctrinal program at The South Baptist Theological Seminary and after studying many others came across Matthew Henry’s book **A Method for Prayer**and like many others, sought to modernize it and change it up for a newer audience seeking to know how to pray. Henry’s book ought to be on everyone’s shelf and it should be pulled down every year just for a refresher and encouragement. The author gives Henry a lot of credit for helping him upgrade his and his wife’s prayer life saying, *“…if you were on a deserted island and could only pray one thing, what would it be?’ We agree we would pray one specific line from Matthew Henry’s prayer for our children, ‘we earnestly pray that Christ may be formed in their souls.’ We couldn’t think of any eternal, substantive request that did not somehow fit within that one request.”*Many have updated and modernized this work, O Palmer Robertson and Ligon Duncan among them with Ligon’s edit getting the highest praise. But in this version the author a bona fide Baptist deleted many of the intercessory prayers and prayers concerning the sacraments as means of grace. So I will go back to the original or maybe I will look up Ligon’s editing work on **A Method for Prayer.**
16. **ROBERT THE BRUCE: A Life from Beginning to End,**by Hourly History (2020). This book is a short but concise look at the hero of Scotland.  While Wallace is remembered for his leadership and tenacity in standing up to the English...namely Edward I (Longshanks)…, Wallace ended up dying at the hands of Edward’s henchmen while Robert the Bruce would fight on until Scottish independence was finally achieved in 1328. He had fought for over 20 years with one goal in sight… a free Scotland. There is little in this book that history hasn’t recorded somewhere else but I did come across this one fact that made his life even more interesting if that is possible. *“It may come as a bit of a surprise that the man who would be hailed as king of the Scots was not entirely Scottish in origin, but this is indeed the case. The Bruce family was descended from French Norman stock, which according to some sources arrived on the shores of England along with the Norman invader William the Conqueror in 1066.”*Robert the Bruce was more than simply a national icon…he represented the lifeblood of a people. One does not have to be Scottish to appreciate Robert the Bruce’s story. We think of Wallace because of the movie Braveheart but there is so much more to the story and that is Robert the Bruce. These little history books cover much of the highlights and are accurate to history. They are small …a Reader’s Digest version…if you will…but for those of us who have read more extensive works of these characters these are adequately sufficient for the historical novice and satisfying for the lover of history as a refresher.
17. **BATTLE  ATERNUS (The Aternien Wars Book 5),**By G.J. Ogden (2023).  Master Commander Rose has a plan but in order to carry this plan out all the pieces must fit into place….and Nathan Clynes must cooperate. In other words, it is doomed to fail…for Nathan is a loose cannon only thinking of himself and his obsession to “ascend”. Now to be fair he has extended his life about as long as medically and technically possible since while he had been the one who “created” the post-humans he was not able to make himself one…besides, his goal is immortality which he believes is just within his grasp. Nathan’s obsession makes the carrying out of the plan almost impossible. I say, almost, because the president and the Congress must weigh in as well…and when politicians get involved with military stuff…well…as we all know things don’t go well. Admiral Krantz gives the green light even before approval has been given to her and the crew plus Nathan set off to Old Aternus to find clues to where New Aternus has been hidden and along the way discovers more than he bargained for. Also, an old enemy turned ally returns just in time and fills in some very needed information in the progression of Carters plan. The question is will they all survive with Nathan around? Will they be able to see the plan come to fruition? Will the war ever end before humanity is snuffed out?  All of this and more is answered in this rousing space drama made all the better by the personal involvement and loss of this crew …as well as gaining a new unexpected crew mate that fits the bill of the Galantine’s crew with one exception.
18. **MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction,**by Kevin De Young (2021). This book has been around for a while now and it is interesting that it is not being quoted more in a positive light. For it is readable, short, informative, short, encouraging, short, and very practical…oh, did I say short? (170 plus or minus pages (with bibliography, endnotes, and Scripture texts depending upon how it is formatted for Kindle, ) We live in a generation within the church that we need clear teaching on the roles of men and women in the home, the church and the work place…this book goes a long way to dealing with all but specifically in the Church. He deals with head coverings, giftedness and the hard passages the prohibit women teaching in worship and he comes to conclusions that some may not like because they are very guardedly complementarian…not loosely complementarian. The second group gives complementarianism its bad name for the most part seeking to say they are conservative and biblical while seeking to build an unnecessary bridge allowing women to fulfill a role they were never intended to fill. Kevin focuses on the truth that when God created male and female in His image His plan was while they were created FOR one another they are distinct even in the oneness created in marriage. Men and women are not inter-changeable…each are designed to function as God has designed them to and that design is not to be ignored or misconstrued. Men and women in all facets of the Life that God has created are to complement one another…more so in marriage perhaps but still the basic premise is true. There is a clear path from doctrine to practical implementation by God’s people. I highly recommend this book.
19. **A WOUNDED CONSCIENCE CURED, The Weak One Strengthened and the Doubting Satisfied. By Way of an Answer to Dr. Henry Fearne,**by William Bridge (1642 originally printed, 2023 Monergism digital).  Interestingly, I picked this up as a treatise for the weak and doubtful and it turns out to be talking mostly about the biblical right of civil disobedience. Having said that, this is a powerful theological treatise that addresses the issue of conscience and moral integrity in the face of conflict and doubt. Written during a turbulent period of political and religious upheaval in 17th-century England, (Charles I is on the throne and Parliament is Protestant) Bridge tackles the relationship between civil authority, obedience to rulers, and the rights of Christians to resist tyranny. The work is structured as a detailed response to Dr. Henry Fearne's defense of the monarchy's absolute authority, particularly in matters of governance and religion. Fearne’s treatise that this is a refutation of **The Resolving of the Conscience**which basically had as its underlining premise, *“He asserts that the Crown of England has been passed down through three conquests. Therefore, the monarchy has an absolute (read divine ) right and authority over its subjects even with a parliament in place.”*Bridge speaks clearly of his overall approval for the monarchy but is clear that when the monarchy begins to impose arbitrary and unjust laws (according to God’s standard) then the o monarchy can be opposed as the protestant are doing at the time that will lead to Charles I death. It is a masterful history and he does deliberate on more than simply civil disobedience but also our absolute obedience to our King…the Lord …the Creator God. There is always so much discussion concerning the absolute laws of men…here in Bridge deals with and clarifies the absolute law of God and where Kings err is thinking themselves above the Law of God that placed them in the position of stewardship of his people.

1. **THE EMISSARY: Omega Task Force Book 1,**by G.J. Ogden (2021) Captain Lucas Sterling is an Omega Captain. He and his crew on the *Invictus* are a covert black-ops group of men and women sent in to do the hard task.  Along the way we meet another Omega Captain and her crew Lana McQueen. These 2 terms make up a taskforce specifically for the person of neutralizing “turned” citizens whether military or civilian.  They both passed the test that proved their commitment to this task so as to preserve humanity…and to do so they will be called to place their own humanity on the line. Along the way they have had to make the hard choices of neutralizing even friends that have been turned by the Sa’Nerran mind-control weapon. Surrender is not an option for the Omega taskforce though this mandate is not so clear among the politicians of the day. The Sa’Nerran’s will seek to overthrow once again with a surprising emissary, but they seem to be up to their old games. Captain Sterling knows his enemy well and he knows that they are only interested in one thing…the total annihilation of the human race. The crew of the *Invictus*is as interesting as its Captain. Banks is a superhuman first officer …She-Hulkish…if you get my drift, with Sterling one of the few who can bring her back when she goes off on an enemy. Shade is his tactical and officer over the on-board space Marines and little is known of her but as the story goes on her loyalty is unquestioned…Keller is the navigation officer who can do things with the *Invictus*only dreamed of by other navigators …these along with an assorted cast of mis-fits and extremely gifted persons makes for a team that functions way above the established patterns for a crew. Along the way as they seek to undermine the Sa’Nerran plots against humanity they have some great space battles along with ground battles that are both intense and sometimes comical.  All and all a great series.

1. **ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,**by John Calvin, translated by Raymond A. Blacketer (2024). Of all of Calvin’s contributions this little book may be his best.  Often referred to as Calvin’s “Golden Booklet” is has served the church for centuries answering the simple but hard question, *What does it mean to live faithfully as a Christian?*Having read this before from translations that date back to the mid-1800’s it is good to have an updated version like this to be shared with a newer generation. John Calvin’s concern to make the Institutes of the Christian Religion useful and practical is especially manifest in his teaching on the Christian life. He did not have a chapter on the Christian life in the first, short edition of the Institutes (published in 1536), but he added a concluding chapter on this topic in the second edition (published three years later in 1539). Calvin considered this material to be of such great importance that in 1550 he had it printed as a booklet on its own, both in Latin and in his native French…the final form of Calvin’s Institutes. This booklet was lifted from Calvin’s Institutes Book 3 and chapters 6-10 and has risen to be the cream of classic Reformed orthodoxy. This book is divided into five sections. First, Calvin tells us that every follower of Christ loves righteousness and is called to righteousness. The following chapters suggest ways to go about seeking righteousness. In answering Christ's call to live rightly, Calvin stresses the importance of constant patience and clinging to the grace given through Christ's death and resurrection. As Christians seek to order their lives around these principles, they must meditate upon God's plan for the future and how to make that future a reality. Finally, Calvin proposes a few ways how each person can bring God's grace to a fallen world and avoid abusing their roles as representatives of God to that world. Calvin, always the pastor answered the question why we don’t always do that which we wish this way, *“You see, the blindness with which we all rush into love of ourselves is such that it seems to each of us that we have good reason to elevate ourselves and to despise all others in comparison with ourselves.* *And it is exceptionally important for you to have your blind love of self wiped away so you may rightly become aware of your weakness; to be moved by a sense of your own weakness so you may learn to distrust yourself; to distrust yourself so you may transfer your confidence to God; to rest in God with heartfelt confidence so, by relying on his help, you may remain undefeated to the end; to stand firm in his grace so you may understand that he is truthful in his promises; to have confirmed certainty of his promises so that your hope will be strengthened in this way.”*This very brief text can serve as a short introduction to Calvin's thought for any who wish to broaden their general knowledge or set out on a path of more involved study. In fact, I would recommend the person who has never really studied Calvin before to begin here with this book in whatever translation and dated version you wish. This version however has some great helpful resources that the others do not have to help the student who does in fact which to strive for more.

1. **ARTIFACT (Starship Jericho Book 1),**by Toby Neighbors (2024). There is something out there just beyond Saturn. What it is no one know but some have known of its existence for a long time.  A few decades ago the earth actually received a message from it. The message included plans and specifications to build a new spaceship unlike anything that man had built to date. Mankind had been in space but never venturing farther than Mars. But now with the ship *S.D.F. Jericho* and its Prometheus Drive that possibility of reaching the artifact is a reality. The trip would take 6 months and they would be traveling at 2 million kph something unheard of but the question remained …What was it? Well, the crew is chosen from the best of the best even a medal of honor winner Master Sergeant Marine.Captain Zeke Darius is tapped to lead this expedition which is supposed to be a quick snatch, grab and head back to Earth. Well, of course, nothing goes as planned. After 6 months of smooth sailing…nothing went wrong with the ship …nothing…a minor miracle for things built by men they find themselves on the verge of discovery. They had already traveled farther into the Solar System than any other ship and not they are getting ready to bring on board a piece of “alien” technology”. Of course, that is when things change. They encounter more than they bargained for. Oh, the ships not in danger…but the artifact had been sent there to negotiate. The *Jericho*was created to go further even outside the Sol system to a planet lightyears away to recover a power core that would be necessary for the defense of the Sol system…according to what the artifact GIGI told them. The character development is really good of the crew in stressful situations and in stress less ones. There is a good balance of humor and intrigue as is usual for Neighbors when He writes. *“You have entered hyperspace,” the alien device said. “Holy…” Henry Nash started to say. “Where no man has gone before,” Pete Best said in a joking tone. “Very funny,” Vivian Ramos said. “I don’t get it,” Jacee Bergtoli said. “It’s from an old television show,” Vivian told her. “One that was ludicrous even in its time.” “We’re making history, people,” Lori Lee said. “We’re the first people ever to leave the Sol system.”*But is the adventure over with the recovery of the power core?  Does the artifact have more in store?  We will see, the next installment is out on Halloween called **RENEGADE.**
2. **THE PASTOR IN PRAYER,**by Charles Spurgeon (given and printed in 1877 and the digitalized Monergism 2021).  Spurgeon has been called the Prince of Preachers and God used him to see thousands won into the kingdom in his short life, but it was his prayers that many have said were the greater sermons…were the greater impetus to people swooning in recognition of their laziness in their professed faith and/or  responding for the first time accordingly to God’s call on their life. These are worship service prayers from services led in 1877. Each of these is in old English but each of them is a gem.  I took to using one worship service a day to pray through out loud at the end of my devotionals…whether that be the Dear family’s or the journibling that I do and I have found these prays to be comforting in times of struggle and powerful in times of weakness and joyous the rest of the time. *“Our Father, wilt Thou be pleased to-day to fill us with delight because of Thy love. Are we heavy of heart—let Thy sweet love lighten the burden; for what after all can there be to trouble the man whom God loves? Shall we not find even in Thy rod a sweetness, as Jonathan did, when he dipped his rod in the honey? Hast Thou not said, "as many as I love I rebuke and chasten," shall we not therefore take Thy rebukes and chastenings, and even rejoice in them, because therein the love of God is manifested toward us.”*These sermons especially read out loud are extremely devotional in and of themselves.  *“OUR Father, our faith is in Thee; our expectation is from Thee; our love goeth out towards Thee: we believe Thee; we accept every word of Thy sacred revelation as being eternal verity and immutable truth. Sometimes we are troubled to know whether the promises are for us—whether we really have a share in covenant blessings; but we thank Thee that Thou hast helped many of us to hold a trial in the court of conscience, and since our heart condemns us not we have confidence towards God. Let this be the portion of all Thy children.”*So I highly recommend using them accordingly.
3. **JACOB’S SEED or The Generation of Seeker’s and David’s Delight: or The Excellent on Earth,**by Jeremiah Burroughs (printed post humorously 1643, printed for Monergism 2024). The underlying text for these 2 very long sermons is **Psalm 27:8, *“You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, Your face, Lord, do I seek.’”***  From the printer Roger Daniel about the book we have, *“Thou art presented here with a small treatise of this reverend author, deceased; who by his worthy works (as Abel by his faith) being dead yet speaketh (Hebrews 11:4). The work is but of small bulk, yet has many excellent truths contained in it, concerning two of the most necessary duties in a Christian’s course. The seeking of God's face, a thing so needful in these troublesome days, and yet so generally neglected. Also, concerning the excellence in, and the high esteem that true saints have for their fellow-saints, which is so rare to find in these disjointed and divided times.”*What we have here are 2 expositional sound sermons turned into treatises to call God’s people to seek the Lord while He may be found…regularly and without hesitation…even to the point of setting times during the day to pray to him and rejoice in Him so we don’t forget. One of the reason he says that we don’t seek Him more is that we are hardly convince of the excellency that God places upon us with the righteousness of Christ so we stay away. He makes a strong case for both while reminding us of our place as Jacob’s seed. Also, he says that we stop praying because we are not convinced that our prayers “get through” to God. But we also stop praying because God doesn’t answer the prayers we feel most needful which may not actually be needful at all. *“You pray to God often to be delivered from enemies, and you may think your prayers, especially at times like these, are in vain. No wonder, if you pray simply to gain liberty for trade or deliverance from taxes (though these may be sought). But the house of Jacob seeks God for His name, that it may not be dishonoured, and for His Gospel, that it may not be taken away, and that the power of godliness may not be trampled like dirt in the streets. When they seek God for God, no wonder it is not in vain.”*One of the things that always hits me when I read these “old guys” is how much certain questions get asked no matter what period of the Church we are in. *“But why should I seek God at all? Hasn't God decreed and determined what He will do? What God intends to do, He has decreed from eternity. Therefore, whether we pray or not, it shall come to pass. If we do not pray, it shall still happen. If God has determined to deliver me from sickness, it will happen whether I pray or not. And when someone's time has come to die, they will die, and so when a kingdom's time has come to be destroyed, it shall be destroyed, and not before. So, what good can prayer do?”* But reminding us of who we are in the second sermon doesn’t get any better than this, *“There are wonderful expressions in Scripture that manifest God’s delight in His people, expressed in ways we could not invent or imagine. For example, He calls His people His portion, His pleasant portion (Deut. 32:9). God calls them His inheritance, the lot of His inheritance (Jer. 12:7). He calls them the dearly beloved of His soul (Exod. 19:5). He calls them His peculiar treasure. God has treasures in the world; the creatures are called the "good treasures of the Lord" (Deut. 28), but His people are called His peculiar treasure. There is a unique kind of excellence in the people of God's delight compared to all other creatures. All other creatures are part of His general treasure, but His people are His peculiar treasure. God also calls them His glory: the house of His glory (Isa. 46:13), the crown of His glory (Isa. 60:7), and the throne of His glory (Isa. 62:3). In various places, God calls His people the house of His glory, the crown of His glory, and the throne of His glory.”*Such an uplifting little book free through Monergism.

1. **THE PEACE OF THE CROSS,**by Philip Graham Ryken (Published and Revised by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals-2023.) This is a short booklet that comes originally from a larger work by the author and James Montgomery Boice entitled **THE HEART OF THE CROSS.**(Which I will be getting soon in its 3rd Edition and it will be review here as well.) In this particular booklet Ryken highlights the war that has been and is being raged as part of the Fall of Adam and Eve and how as sons and daughters of men we cannot be reconciled to God…period.  God’s word supports this presupposition in many places. The whole world is at war with God. It doesn’t take much to see that…even His own break His commandments and precepts because we want to rule our lives our way. But Christ…*”* *For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”*(Col. 1:19-20) But for Christ and His Cross work we would always be at battle with God. But Christ reconciled to Himself all things (including His elect). He states clearly, *“Reconciliation does not mean that we changed our minds about God. Left to ourselves, we never would change our minds about God. We would continue in perpetual rebellion.  Reconciliation never would take place. If men and women are to be reconciled to God, God must take the first step.  He must take the initiative. And He does.”*Then he quotes Leon Morris in explanation, *“God is never said in so many words to be reconciled to man. Almost always He is the subject of the verb and is said to reconcile man to Himself. This manner of speaking puts emphasis on the truth that the process of reconciliation originates with God. It is only by the out working of His love that man can be brought into right relationships with His Maker.”*Bottom line,: God does the reconciling for His elect to Himself and in Christ because of His Cross work the reconciliation of all His children…past, present and future,...has been accomplished and applied.

1. **MASTER GENERAL (The Aternien Wars Book 6),**By G.J. Ogden (2024).  Four years later and Nathan Clynes rears his ugly head again…this time in a completely different form as the new God-King of Aternus seeking to wreak chaos on all the universe. It has been four years of peace since the accord was struck with  Markus Aternus , the God-king of the Aterniens. After destroying his human heart Aternus acquiesced to his old nemesis Master Commander Carter Rose and then his “people” turned on him and he died forever and ever. This brought about peace for a time…but in the background New Aternus was planning and scheming under the leadership with a rumored new God-king who was opposed to all biological lifeforms but especially the Union of Nine for how they treated him when he was just a mortal call Nathan Clynes… but he will have his revenge. Carter dreaded this day but it was inevitable and he has been preparing with a new Longsword II class battleship and more post-humans master soldiers including carina who is the first Master Commander in over a century. But they also have a new ally to help remove this scourge from the universe…and old enemy…turn friend who is now the Queen-god of Old Aternus…Monique Dubois ,,,a former Aternien Overseer, who Carter had spared from death. As Nathan Clynes aka Apophis seeks to destroy humanity and remake the universe the Longsword crew and their new allies set out after 2 failed attempts on possibly the final showdown one way or another.  On to the next book **EDEN POINT.**
2. **LAW AND GOSPEL,**by Robert M. Hiller and Michael Horton (2023 from Sola Media and White Horse Inn). An excellent booklet put out to clarify what is often a complicated subject the Law and The Gospel. In these 5 chapters the authors set out to define Law and Gospel in the first 2 chapters. I love the simplicity with which they prove their arguments*. “Everything in Scripture, in both the Old Testament and New Testament, that commands us to do something is “law”. It is good, reflecting God’s righteous will that brings blessing and joy. But commands cannot create the reality of which they speak. God’s law can only tell it like it is, arraigning transgressors before God’s throne. The Gospel is that part of the Word of God that gives life, while everything God says is true and impacts us, not everything that God says is saving. Consequently, the difference between law and gospel is not a difference between the Old and New testaments.  God’s righteous demands and judgments are revealed clearly by Jesus and te apostles; the gospel thread, meanwhile, runs from Genesis 3:15 to the end of Malachi…Revelations….By definition, then, the gospel is not something you can do but an announcement of what has been done for you by someone else.”*The authors then move on to discuss the Reformation distinctives of Law and Gospel giving us a brief history of how the church including many Calvinistic Baptists agreed with the fact that the bible is made up of law and gospel. Next the booklet deals briefly with the way the law and gospel have gotten and get confused today. The authors though want to make it clear, it is the gospel that tells us we have been forgiven our sins. It never accuses us of our sin, that’s the work of the law. The bottom line principle from this booklet is this: Law and Gospel are distinct, but they cannot be separated! There are many excellent quotes from the great old dead guys of the faith as well clarifying where the church has been on this subject for some time. It was free from Sola Media and the White Horse Inn so hopefully it can make the rounds to be read.
3. **DIRECTIONS FOR DAILY COMMUNION WITH GOD: In three discourses, shewing how to begin, how to spend, and how to close every day with God,**by Matthew Henry(originally published 1712, then a THIRD time in 1715 and digitally by Monergism.) This book or treatise has been published almost continually since the first publishing because of its immense worth to the church. These 3 discourses given in the latter years of Henry’s life had his congregation and the greater church in mind. *“We have something to say to God every day. Many are not sensible of this, and it is their sin and misery; they live without God in the world, they think they can live without him, are not sensible of their dependence upon him, and their obligations to him, and therefore for their parts they have nothing to say to him, he never hears from them, no more than the father did from his prodigal son, when he was upon the ramble, from one week’s end to another. They ask scornfully, what can the Almighty do for them? and then no marvel if they ask next, what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? And the result is, they say to the Almighty, depart from us, and so shall their doom be. But I hope better things of you my brethren, and that you are not of those who cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God, you are all ready to own that there is a great deal that the Almighty can do for you, and that there is profit in praying to him, and therefore resolve to draw nigh to God, that he may draw nigh to you!”*His heart’s desire was for God’s church to be a praying church…for there are a great many conversations that need to be had and the better we are at having them, the more likely will continue to have them with our God who delights in listening and answering prayers. He speaks so practically to God’s church even removed 310 years, *“For the first, Let us inquire, what it is to wait on God. You have heard how much it is our duty in the morning to speak to him, in solemn prayer. But have we then done with him for all day? No, we must still be waiting on him; as one to whom we stand very nearly related, and very strongly obliged. To wait on God is to live a life of desire towards him, delight in him, dependence on him, and devotedness to him…It is good to be speedy in renewing our repentance; before the heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Delays are dangerous; green wounds may soon be cured, if taken in time, but if they stink and are corrupt, as the Psalmist complains,****PS 38:5, ‘My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness…’****,  it is our fault and folly, and the cure will be difficult.”*This is a book we need to put on our ready list every 5 years or so …so we can evaluate how we are doing in our relationship with the Lord of glory.
4. **THE THUNDER: A Novel on John Knox,**by Douglas Bond (2012). Recommended by Kenny Brown, Ii found this to be a delightful tale of adventure, hardship and standing firm for the gospel in the face of some of the most formidable opponents ever leveled against one man …at least since the Prophets, Jesus and Paul…and this a novel. Given the genre one would have expected a bit more liberties but Douglas Bond takes none that I could tell...and I am reading his biography on Knox just now, entitled **The Mighty Weakness of John Knox.** This story picks up at the siege of St. Andrews right after Rev. Wishart was killed for His faith and the bishop who sentence Him… killed in vengeance. The French are at the walls and prepared to take this castle that many had considered untraceable in years past but cannon fire can take down the sturdiest of walls. John Knox is found being made “chaplain” and preaching his first sermon. All throughout the author speaks of Knox’ anchor of the faith that had brought him powerfully to Christ and had sustained him and will sustain him up till his death 2 decades later. **I Corinthians 15: 20-25- *“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”***As I have been reading these book I have often been moved by my own lack and find myself praying this prayer that Knox often prayed, *“O Lord eternal! Move and govern my tongue to speak the truth and the hearts of thy people to understand and obey the same.”* But, of course, he was the thunder whether it be before lords or Queens he sought to present his Master, Jesus Christ in the best light never wavering from that mission as the Reformation grew in Scotland. Without fear he stood before Kings and Queens and lived what he often said, “A man with God is always in the majority.” A saying of his that is forever inscribed in his statue in Geneva.  Thank you to Kenny for recommending this book.  I purposefully take books like this slowly so I don’t miss anything.
5. **THE VANITY OF THOUGHTS DISCOVERED: With their Danger and Cure ,**by Thomas Goodwin (1638, Updated version to modern English and structure, Monergism digital publishing 2023.) I love how timely this book is and how it reveals how people of all ages have the same troubles spiritually. His purpose in writing is to help his people to understand that they are not alone when it comes to focusing on Christ because of the difficulties of distractions and our thoughts. He writes to help us all understand better how we can keep focused on Christ and His will by showing that are minds tend toward vain thinking whether prompted by us or simply by the sin within us. And then he gives us remedies that will help us stay focused. He says, *“Thoughts are to be repented of. Repentance is expressed as beginning with them, as in****Isaiah 55:7: ‘Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts.’****A person is never truly and profoundly transformed, as mentioned in****2 Corinthians 10:4-5,****until****‘…every thought is brought into obedience.’****This indicates that thoughts are naturally rebellious and contrary to grace. Furthermore, it showcases the power of grace, which can rule and subdue such a formidable force as our thoughts, ultimately commanding them all. This will be fully accomplished when we attain perfect holiness. Thoughts defile a person, and only sin can cause defilement. In****Matthew 15:18-19,****it is stated,****‘Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts; these defile the man.’****…In conclusion, it is not the nature of the thoughts that reside in your hearts and pass through them, but rather the lodging they find, that distinguishes your repentance.”*Beginning at repentance helps us to recognize that there is NO THING within us that is not tainted by sin so that is where he begins in helping us to focus better on Christ. He goes on to speak about the vanity of Solomon …knowledge for knowledge sake. *“The vanity of the mind is evident in curiosity, a strong desire and itch to be fed with knowledge and to think about things that have no relevance to us. Scholars provide a perfect example of this, as their primary work revolves around this pursuit. How many valuable thoughts are wasted in this manner! They indulge in a curiosity for knowledge, as rebuked by the Apostle in various instances, such as those who pursue ‘oppositions of science falsely so called’ in****1 Timothy 6:4, 20****, or****‘curiosities of knowledge of things they have not seen.’”***As do many of the Puritan pastor he exhorts us to begin our days with God, *“Likewise, to prevent those vain and empty thoughts that arise from emptiness, fill your heart first with thoughts of God; delve into His wine-cellar. Whenever you open your eyes, you will notice many suitors waiting to engage with your thoughts, like clients at lawyers' doors, presenting various vanities and concerns. But speak with God first; He will say something to your heart that will settle it for the entire day. Do this before the crowd of worldly affairs overwhelms you. A few thoughts of faith would save us from many thoughts of worries and fears in the tasks we undertake, which often prove to be in vain as they do not advance the intended purpose.”*He seeks to write a book profound enough and yet short enough that it can be read through first in a night or on a Sunday afternoon and then returned to that it might be better applied. Great read.
6. **THE MIGHTY WEAKNESS OF JOHN KNOX (A Long Line of Godly Men series)**, by Douglas Bond (2011 Ligonier Ministries). This short book spends the first 25 pages exclusively on His biography and then it take the next 120 explaining the “things” that were important to Him, like, the power of Christ, of prayer, of the pulpit, of the pen, of predestination, of empowering the weak and though physically weak and frail often in life a legacy of strength. *“In his lifetime, Knox was denounced by regents, queens, and councils, and his effigy was hoisted high and burned at the Mercat Cross in Edinburgh.  Ridiculed as ‘Knox the knave’ and ‘a runagate Scot,’ he was outlawed and forbidden to preach by the archbishop of St. Andrews, and orders were issued that he be shot on sight if he failed to comply. Knox did not comply. Years later, a would-be assassin fired a shot through a window of Knox’s house in Edinburgh, narrowly missing his mark. Still Knox preached.”* Most people who write about Knox only highlight his fiery preaching and disposition when in the presence of profane rulers or those who purposefully mistreated their servants and serfs leaving the rest of us to wonder if we can rise to the task forgetting that God rose Him to the task of “saving” a nation from the ills of Roman Catholicism. *“Knox readily affirmed that we owe absolute obedience to the law, but one can only imagine how liberating was his message of deliverance from sin and the curse of the law by the vicarious obedience of Christ, and how it must have thrilled Scotland, long held in bondage to law by a distorted gospel. Knox taught that the ‘Synagogue of Satan,’ as he termed the Roman Catholic Church, had reconstructed a kingdom of law and that the Reformation was restoring the kingdom of grace. Sinners owe what they can never pay to the law, so Knox preached: ‘We are never able perfectly to fulfill the works of the law. . . . It is therefore essential for us to lay hold on Christ Jesus, in his righteousness and his atonement, since he is the end and consummation of the law and since it is by him that we are set at liberty.’”*Oh, he would preach so today to seek to light a fire once again in his homeland which has all but snuffed out the light…even removing his headstone from in front of St. Giles. What we see in Bonds book is this fiery temperament when needed but also a genuinely felt and openly confessed weakness that depended daily and completely on the grace of His Lord and savior Jesus Christ. *“Yet it was not only Knox’s friends and supporters who appreciated the wide-ranging effect of his ministry of prayer. According to historian John Howie, Knox’s ardent enemy, the queen regent, Mary Guise, admitted that she was ‘more afraid of [Knox’s] prayers than of an army of 10,000 men.’ If every Christian prayed like Knox, the devil and his minions would melt like wax before the fire.”*Bond also supplies us with a copy of the scots Confession that was put together in just 4 days and as well an almost exhaustive bibliography of the most renowned works that speak of Knox favorably and not.  This is a great read and a good side read to the novel on Knox by Bond, **THE THUNDER: A Novel on John Knox.**Some may stay away because of how Stephen Lawson has fallen from Grace but this series is well worth the time to read. I have highlighted many others in this series through the years; like Richard Sibbes and Martin Luther to just speak of two.
7. **A FAITHFUL ADMONITION,**by John Knox (Printed first in 1554, reprinted digitally by Monergism 2023)  The Full title of the sermon that became a treatise is **A FAITHFUL ADMONITION: made by John Knox unto professor’s of God’s truth in England, whereby thou mayest learn how God will have His Church exercised with troubles and how He defends it in the same.**This treatise has two parts. The first titled; The epistle of a banished man out of Leicestershire, sometimes one of the Preachers of God’s word there, to the Christian reader, wishes health, deliverance and felicity. Under Mary of Guise, Mary I,  “Bloody Mary” the protestant church suffered so tremdously that it led Knox to say, *“There has been no time since the first fashing of man which has not had its manifold miseries and great troubles by which God chastened and punished men for their evil life and unthankfulness to him, continually refusing his calling and warning.”* Don’t ever let it be said that even these men so highly to be praised wouldn’t speak in hyperbole. But as one who lived through this time and suffered under her hand and then the hand of her daughter Mary Queen of Scots he is speaking from his own experience and this is what it seemed like. This is what every other cataclysmic time in the Church’s existence felt like to those experiencing the persecution, oppression and death. His chosen text for his Admonition was Matthew 14:22-32 a text that was dear to his heart. Jesus had left His disciples having sent them ahead to the other side of the lake and a great tempest rose up and they were scared. After a while they see Jesus and Peter jumps up and begins to go to Him and then he begins to sink into the raging seas, crying out *“Save me”.* The point of the admonition is for the faithful in England during this time of horror from the monarchy, which was meant to protect and preserve, to stay the course. Do not make rash decisions, as Peter did, who without thinking jump into the water that he knew had never held him up before…though Jesus had beckoned him to come if he wished.  But also, to remember when we do sin in such a way that it is not over for the faithful…for Jesus is always with us as He reaches out to bring Peter back out of the depths. He says, *“The reason why God's elect begin to faint and sink down in times of great adversity is fear and unbelief, as is evident in Peter's case. As long as Peter did not fear danger and did not mistrust Christ's word, the waters, contrary to their nature, obeyed and supported him as if they were solid ground. However, as soon as he began to despair and fear, he started to sink. This instructs us that living faith makes a person bold and can carry them through insurmountable perils that are beyond the capabilities of nature. But when faith begins to weaken, a person starts to sink in every danger, as seen in the previously mentioned stories. Even though they may have faltered in their journey, even though the weakness of their faith allowed them to sink, they cannot be torn from the hand of Christ. He will not allow them to drown, nor will the deep devour them. For the glory of His own name, He must deliver them because they are entrusted to His care, protection, and safekeeping. Therefore, He will guard and defend those whom He has received from His Father—guard them from sin, death, the devil, and hell.”*This is the true King and He is the reason to stand and march ahead securing the Reformation in Scotland. But also, this is a good reminder of the fact that we need to be just as bold to secure the Reformation in Victoria, Texas.
8. **EDEN POINT (The Aternien Wars Book 7),**By G.J. Ogden (2024). Well, we are back and this time while Apophis, the God-king of New Aternus is still a threat he hasn’t been doing much giving Carter and Carina with the crew of the *Ashkelon*time to checkup on Cyrus Duvall. It seems he is building and army and he is working overtime preparing MRE’s (meal ready to eat) and no one knows why. But it will be made clear. Well, after a couple of dust ups with Cyrus’ goons Carter finds himself needing to be a scapegoat for the Admiral so that carina and her crew can continue protecting both the Union and the Old Aterniens. Cyrus decided to attack the old Aterniens and Monique’s people are once again greatly decimated by another third at least. At the same time Apophis destroys terra Four where over half of the food supply is generated for the Union. Coincidence? Carter thinks not finally figuring out why Duvall had been stockpiling so much foodstuffs...so he would look like a savior while everyone else looks like Aternien sympathizers. Duvall’s popularity continues to grow because of the “fake news” he spews out over the stations he owns and control. Is it possible that Duvall the man who openly hates Aterniens and post-humans with a passion is actually working with Apophis since they have similar goals…though once in bed with this devil there is no getting out…though he is yet to see that driven by his own lust for Union domination?What is a de-commissioned post-human going to do to “save” the Union…or can he all by himself? Will Duvall win over the hearts and minds of the Union people? What will that mean for the post humans?  They know how to defeat Apophis but will they be able to get the materials necessary since Duvall seems to be supplying Apophis with similar materials? Where will the Old Aterniens settle a third time? SPOILER ALERT- Egypt! Getting tired of this series in that the story is so fragmented at this point…but there are only 3 books left so we will see. Next up **NEXUS SHARD(The Aternien Wars Book 8).**
9. **PATHFINDER (First Colony book 17) ,**by Ken Lozito (2024).  This is yet another of my favorite series that Ken keeps producing from time to time. As the New Earthers expand they keep looking for the Vemus that almost exterminated their race. Is this a good idea? In the last book as they were seeking new ways to hunt down and eradicate the Vemus something new occurred. Along the way Gen. Gates meets a curious alien who is one the Phantoms that they are convinced has been helping them along the way to fight the Vemus and the General finds himself at a crossroads on what to do going forward. Well, with the help of the Phantoms, Noah has improved and updated the I-Drive and they are getting ready to test it when it “tested itself”…or were the Phantoms to blame. They find themselves so far from home that they cannot get a message back…in fact it will take weeks or months just to figure out where they are. With supplies dwindling they must jump again …hopefully to a planet where they can restock their food and water supplies along with fixing the damage that was done to the ship because of the unusual I-Drive trip. So they land and begin repairs and almost immediately they begin to search out the planet that all their readings said was devoid of intelligent life…but that was not so. The encounter a species that can stealth themselves and do things that seem impossible to the *Pathfinder* crew. Along the way they encounter another Phantom.  Is he a prisoner or is he running the show? Throughout this journey it is revealed that because of their desire for anonymity the people of the planet say they can’t leave. Well that certainly doesn’t go over well with Connor and any of the others so they immediately seek a way to leave the planet behind.  But can they go home? Did the phantoms bring them here for a reason unknown to them yet? Will the I-Drive even do what they want…no need it to do?   Not sure when the next book will come out, but these are like old friends you simply pick up where you left off no matter how much time transpires in between.
10. **THE HEART OF THE CROSS,**by Dr. James Montgomery Boice and Dr. Philip Graham Ryken copyright 1999 through P & R Publishing reissued 2022) This is a timeless devotional on the Cross. It is written in 3 parts. The first focuses on the words from the cross. The second, the real last words of Christ (those that He spoke after His resurrection) and third; the message of the Cross...its necessity, offense, peace, power triumph, boast and the way of the cross. This was written and published the year before dr. Boice went home to be with the Lord so most of the devotion as are written by Dr. Ryken. Dr. Boice says about Christians having a full understanding of the Cross this; *“Apart from the cross, the Christian religion becomes only a type of human self-deification that leads to arrogance and presumption, a religion that supposes wrongly that we can somehow save ourselves. With the cross at the center, Christianity offers the sole ground for our standing before God as justified men and women and the only adequate motivation for a life of rest in God and genuine self-sacrifice for others. We are led to give all we have because on the cross Jesus gave all he had for us.”*In talking about His last words from the Cross one of this insights I gained was this statement, *“The thirst of Jesus Christ was a genuine thirst. Wounded men are often thirsty. As their lifeblood drains away, their fluid levels are depleted and they crave liquids. That is especially the case when a man is crucified, for crucifixion is a long, slow dehydration. If the thirst of Jesus Christ was a genuine thirst, then it was a human thirst. God does not get thirsty. He is never short on fluids. Angels do not get thirsty. They are spiritual beings who do not experience physical lack. Among rational beings, only humans have the capacity for thirst. The thirst of Jesus Christ on the cross was the thirst of a dying man. It was proof that he was human after all. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was and is both fully God and fully man. We needed Jesus to be a man. If he was going to save us, if he was going to die in our place, if he was going to pay for the sins we were supposed to pay for, then he needed to be one of us to do it.”*In the second section I have chosen this quote, *“That word is given twice in this passage, both by the angel and by Jesus himself. It is the command repeated more than any other in the pages of the Bible: “Fear not!” or “Do not be afraid.” Whenever you are fearful, it is nice to be told not to be afraid, especially by someone you trust. But what is really comforting is to have a good reason not to be afraid. Imagine that you must travel through a dark and dangerous forest on a moonless night. It would be nice for someone to tell you not to be afraid, but that will not comfort you very much when you are wandering in the pitch black and something flutters against your face. It would be much more comforting for someone to say, “Here, take this giant flashlight.” The reason the angel was such a comfort to the women at the empty tomb was that he gave them good reason not to fear. The angel told them, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay” (vv. 5–6). The angel began by consoling the women. He understood why they were fearful. He knew they felt lost without Jesus. He knew they were looking for him and were still grieving over his death. But he also knew there was no reason for them to be afraid. The resurrection of Jesus Christ calms their every fear. Or at least it ought to. The Bible says, “the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy” (v. 8). Despite their joy, they were still afraid. We do not know why they were still fearful. Perhaps what the angel told them sounded too good to be true. Perhaps they could not quite bring themselves to believe it. Perhaps the very idea of Jesus rising from the dead sounded frightening. In any case, they were afraid, as we human beings often are.”* In the third, this stood out to me, *““God’s law is not the problem. The problem is that human beings are lawbreakers. “No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.” (WSC #82) We worship anything and everything except God. We curse God when things go wrong at the office. We do not give our fathers and mothers the respect they deserve. We stretch the truth, cheat, and steal. Or we are discontent with what we have because we want something else. In one way or another, we do not keep God’s regulations. Since we are lawbreakers, God’s law is against us. It is our enemy. It stands opposed to us. The list of God’s laws is also a list of our sins. Every one of God’s regulations is another reminder that we have sinned against a holy God. So this is the hand-signed bill the Bible has in mind when it speaks of “the written code.” It is a record of the infinite debt we owe to God because we have broken his law.”*This book takes one on a personal journey to the cross of Christ where we will stand amazed at its inestimable worth.

1. **JONAH: God’s Holy Runaway,**by Tim Mulder (unpublished as to this reading 2024-25?). Wow…what a wild ride…all the way to the end! This book study relentlessly pushes its readers to see the character of God in ways we don’t normally (care) to consider. Jonah missed it over and over again, but the author will NOT allow his reads to miss it. There are other good commentaries and studies on Jonah out there, but this study is like the author is placing his hands on your cheeks and steering your gaze at the truth at every point and not relenting of his hold until we are struck with the epiphany of God’s truth of who He really is. One of his many great question caused me to pause, *“Don’t we have our own standards that God must meet for Him to be God?”* This book study can be a real wake up call for Christians encouraging us in how we are to live and proclaim the gospel among the world, even to those we don’t like much. But, if I’m honest, it is his constant focus on God’s characters and my need for on-going repentance…and God’s continued willingness to forgive…that caught my eye and arrested me at every turn in this study. My attitude, as he points out, needs to start with how we understand and love our God.  the greatest commandment is to love God with our all, and the next greatest commandment is to love our neighbor…on these two great truths we are to reflect.  How well are we doing, is a good place to begin, but… Do we really care, needs to be added to the first question. The author uses Jonah to bring us up quick so that we might reflect on these simple and profound truths. Thanks Tim! An interesting read during Advent to be sure.

1. **THE LORD OF PSALM 23: Jesus Our Shepherd, Companion and Host,**by David Gibson, pastor Trinity Church, Aberdeen Scotland (2023). The first thing I want to say that everyone ought to be reading the Gibson (Jonathan and David)) brother’s works. They may be the best thing to come out of Scotland since John Knox and Sinclair Ferguson. Fun fact: David Gibson was Sinclair’s pastor until Sinclair moved to the states. This work on the 23rd psalm is nothing less than inspiring. He walks us through each verse of this short but beloved psalm thoroughly examining its 3 depictions of the believer’s union with Christ: sheep to Shepherd, traveler to companion, and guest to host. One quote that kind of wrapped it all up for me was this one, *Our journey is long, so we need a shepherd, and it is dangerous so we need a companion, and it is wearisome so we need a host in Christ Jesus. But the journey has always had an ultimate destination in min, the restoration/return to the house of the Lord.”*He shows where this psalm has less to do with our daily lives than it does with our Good Shepherd leading us back to our true home where we find rest in Him. The psalm begins and ends with the LORD present and us in His presence reminding us that He means it when He says ***“I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forevermore.”***  Or another translation could be, ***“I shall return to dwell in the house of the LORD forevermore.”*** Our current location is NOT our home.  We were created to be in fellowship with God and that is where we are ultimately being led back to. Home. Even in verse 2 where the ESV says ***“He restores my soul.”*** This could be read ***“He causes my soul to return.”…***which actually goes along with the progression of the rest of the Psalm; and the rest of scripture… towards Home…the dwelling that Jesus goes to prepare for us. In this life we wander too much, but the Shepherd leads us home, the companion aids iin that journey and the host refreshes us when we get there…Home. Since we are adopted into the family of the Lord we are heading home…now. A wonderful reminder of an old Psalm that certainly needs a bit more reflection.
2. **COLOSSIANS: At His Feet Studies,**by Hope Blanton and Christine Gordon (2023).  One of the main reasons that I like these studies is the questions at the beginning of each chapter that gives individual studiers the opportunity to interact with the Scriptures *before*they interact with the commentary…and at the same time gives the group the opportunity to consider together the Word before they consider the commentary. I see, at least,  2 benefits to this (1) individuals and groups get more comfortable with the actual Word of God as it speaks to us, (2) it helps all to understand that “we” can understand God’s Word without having to have a professional with us. Maybe a third benefit is that we get to hear how other believers interact with the Scripture thus filling us with godly wisdom from one another… a means of grace to be sure. The Spirit delights in giving us understanding this book causes the readers to engage with the Word to begin that process of learning. Now to the rest of the book…sometimes the commentary is weak and other times strong as it is meant to speak to different people where they are all at the same time. But it is always on target like this tidbit, *“Christ is enough to make us new, change our habits, and help us perceive false and true teaching. Christ is sufficient to enable our putting off of old sin habits and putting on of his character. The fullness of Christ as he dwells in the church is enough that we might love each other there. He is sufficient for husbands to love their wives and wives to submit to their husbands, and for us all to love the outsider and walk wisely among them. In all things, Christ is preeminent. In all things, he is sufficient.”*In another place when commenting on the Christocentric household codes of Colossians 3:18-4:1 they says, *“Notice the use of the word “Lord”–eight times in verses 3: 18–4: 1 (“ master” is translated from the same Greek base: kurios). Paul only uses this word six other times in the entire letter. He is impressing upon these brothers and sisters that the lordship of Jesus must influence every relationship.”*The ending questions are not always thought provoking (since we are interacting with commentary mixed with the Word). But depending upon the leader and the depth of maturity of the learners they can spur conversations that could be enlightening to our applications in life.