**2025 Pastor’s Reading list**

**1.    PRECIOUS FAITH, by Jeremiah Burroughs, Published in England in 1655,nine years after his death and then this edition if from Monergism digital Copyright © 2024). This is perhaps one of the easiest readings by him that I have read so far as far as style. He laid this out almost with bullet points as he was proving his point of how precious is the faith the God grants to us his elect. While using other scriptures to make his case to his readers, his main text is from II Peter 1:1 *“…to them who have obtained like precious faith with us….”* (KJV) The ESV translates the Greek word translated by many other texts *“precious”* as a faith *of equal standing*, which is technically true but doesn’t seem to sound right until you understand Peter’s and Burroughs’s main point.  The Greek word actually means “of equal value”. This faith is precious but it is NOT special to us. It is the same as the faith of the Apostles…or for that matter the prophets and the patriarchs.  Peter uses it to underscore the equality of all believers before the Lord no matter the strength or maturity of our faith. His main issue and the reason for writing this treatise that is now part of a multi-volume set of his works is basically this, *“Faith brings acceptability not only to our persons but also to our actions. It graces both the individual and their works at the throne of grace, and that is indeed a precious grace. Is it not worth more than the riches of this world to possess something that makes our poor, humble, and feeble services acceptable to God? This acceptability is accomplished only by the grace of faith. …: if faith is indeed so precious, then how great a pity it is that those who have it do not make greater use of it. Many believers to whom God has granted precious faith make but little use of it. Solomon says, ‘It is a grief to see a man who has riches yet knows not how to use them.’ So too, it is sorrowful to see a believer have faith yet know so little of how to employ it. Therefore, you who are believers—seeing that God has bestowed this precious faith upon you—make use of it in every opportunity. God delights in seeing faith exercised; thus, make a habit of putting this grace of faith into practice. I emphasise this point particularly because, often, Christians—when faced with trials, afflictions, or temptations—fail to exercise their faith as they should.”*To that end, we as Christian according to Burroughs’s, writing almost 400 years ago give some great application to those of us who seek to make this precious faith more evident so the God is glorified more.  *“Secondly, when you come to hear the Word, listen to each truth as though it infinitely concerns your soul and eternal state. Come with this disposition, for it is often the reason people lack faith—they do not listen as if it pertains to them personally. For instance, if someone tells a story that I think has little relevance to me, I am less inclined to pay attention or believe it. But if I hear something that deeply concerns me, I weigh and consider it carefully, making it easier to believe. In the same way, know that every truth you hear in the Word pertains to your life. Weigh and ponder these truths, for God works faith in us in a way that engages our rational capacities, even though the work itself is supernatural.”*He is always practical and he is always pastoral. It is great that this is free from Monergism for our consumption.**

**2.    RENEGADE: (Starship Jericho Book 2), by Toby Neighbors (2024). The crew of the *Jericho*back in book 1 went to connect with a probe that earth scientists had been studying from afar for a couple of centuries. At some point in their study and the advance of mankind technologically the probe sent plans to build the *Jericho.*They traveled to the probe with absolutely no hiccups…everything was perfect and ran to perfection.  After linking up with the probe GIGI, an AI of sorts, has been guiding them as far as what to do next. The first thing was a quest to discover a weapon so powerful that they could protect the Sol system.  Their mandate went from connecting with the probe and bringing it back to earth to be studied to going forth into the greater galaxy to discover this weapon that could protect earth and the entre Sol system. Captain Darius has been sensing that perhaps there was some ulterior motive for this discovery and being told about this weapon along with the Marine Master Sargent Remmy, which GIGI initially imprinted with. But irregardless; the potential for the Sol system drives them forward. After they pick up a power source that makes the *Jericho* even more efficient, if that is possible…THEN… GIGI talks about a long abandon “Adoroni ship” that would stay the hand of the Imperium’s rule and desire for the Sol System. So the quest is extended to look for this ship. Along the way they have to fight off some slave traders and with each encounter with an alien culture their knowledge of the Imperium grows. When they find the “ship” it is bigger than anything they could have imagined even collectively and appears to be as powerful as GIGI has said it is. Now it seems the *Jericho*is meant to be the power source for this gigantic ship so they link with it and then GIGI gives more information about the Imperium and they encounter other species that are left wondering if the humans have been given this technology...this ship… to be the Saviors of the galaxy as the Adoroni were once. It is becoming more obvious that this is the purpose for this encounter and now the Imperium is in play for they are searching for this ship to make it their own.  A battle is brewing with their maniacal emperor…actually it is certain… but will one ship be able to do anything against such a large armada? Can they learn the capability of this one ship in time? All this and more along with the love and jealousy brewing on the ship to be determined in the next book …hopefully out soon. (As an aside: another mostly clean book just some PG language peppered in but not distracting.)**

**3.    NEXUS SHARD (The Aternien Wars Book 8), By G.J. Ogden (2024). Governments…real and imaginary always are short sighted when it comes to an enemy. The best weapons they have against the Aterniens have been sidelined at best. Master General Rose has been relieved of command and is off trying to find a nexus shard …a material needed to make another “gateway” to try and kill Apophis…without any Union approval, oversight of armor.  The *Ascalon* and Master Commander Larson are placed among the other ships with no particular direction even though they have the power of 3 or 4 fleets. Typical governments more worried about being embarrassed that protecting their people. Along the way they discover the secret to all of Crus Duvall’s power and influence and that is Apophis…though he doesn’t figure it out until it is too late. Lots of intrigue and action in this one even a great rescue operation toward the end that may place carina in the same crosshairs that Carter faced just weeks ago with the government once again making decisions to protect themselves rather than the people with the only “weapon” that is worthy of the Arteriens…the post humans and the Ascalon.**

**4.    VOID RECON (OMEGA TASKFORCE BOOK 2), by G.J. Ogden (2021). They say space is cold but to be a true Omega Captain you must be colder still. So much has come to light since the “turning” of former Omega officers concerning the way the military has been trying to keep the United Governments safe from the Sa’Nerra but with the latest destruction of the Fleets foremost operating post in space the War Council decides to sue for peace. But peace cannot be had with the Sa’Nerrans since their goal is the expressed annihilation of all human life. So the Admiral sends Lucas and His crew of the *Invictus*into the Void to find the super-weapon of the SA’Nerra, but the Viod is vast and when the calls comes to defend the station that search must be called off for the moment. So while the War Council seeks peace they have banned any travel in the Void even the Omega taskforce now tasked with finding the one man that might be able to “beat” the mind control devise of the Sa’Nerrans. But the problem is he has been reported as dead…but that is the way he wants it as he shuttled off into the Void years ago. So what is ahead of the Omega Captain and his Admiral?  Whatever it is Captain Sterling and his crew of Omega officers do NOT intend to fail.**

**5.    TWICE FORSAKEN (The Aternien Wars Book 9), By G.J. Ogden (2024). Not sure if this was a good title for this book. For both carter and Carina had been cast aside by the end of the last book with a dual desire to continue the fight. Operation Serpent had cost the Union and Carina personally. After being relieved of duty she was awaiting her fate when disaster struck the station on which that sat above the main military planet of the Union. The posts are destroyed and the crew of the *Ascalon*has to break away from a doomed space station. In the meantime Carina’s aunt is infected by the nano-“virus” that makes its inhabitants zombies of Apophis…but, of course, Carina won’t let her go…she must save her only remaining family member. After hitching a ride with Carter after getting their Master Medic they watch the *Ascalon*get destroyed by Apophis’ main ship but not before they almost took it out. Carina lost most of her crew.  But they made their get a way and wound up back at the Dune City with the Old Aterniens with a plan to hurt the God-king perhaps fatally. The Union may have forsaken them…actually at this point the reader is left wondering if anyone even knows or cares that they are alive since they are all only watching out for themselves…not being prejudicial at this poit…self-preservation has kicked in and the Union is consumed with finding a place to hide…no concern whatsoever for the post-humans. So we are left as we finish this book with the questions of: will Klara Krantz be healed? Will they actually find balance in the universe by defeating Apophis in a way that will enable Monique to bring her people together? Moving on to #10- CHAOS ARTERNUS.**

**6.    LOOKING UNTO JESUS, A View of the Everlasting Gospel, or the Soul's Eyeing of Jesus, as carrying on the Great Work of Man's Salvation, from First to Last." Book 1, by Isaac Ambrose (originally published in 1680 Monergism 2024). Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664) was an English Puritan preacher and writer. This work was originally part of a six volume set that Monergism decided to break apart for easier consumption by their readers. This series is wrapped around Hebrews 12:1-3- *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and cis seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”*This passage is the basis but in this volume He focuses heavily on verse 2. He speaks well of how we are to focus …look unto Jesus … but when we don’t… *“The setting of the heart upon the world. This is a higher degree of this spiritual adultery. Our hearts are due and proper to Christ. To set them upon the world, when they should be chaste and loyal to Jesus Christ—what adultery is this? Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. A woman who is not content with one husband must surely be a harlot.”*Ouch! Or even this, *“The Apostle tells us of a cloud of witnesses in the preceding verse, to which, no doubt, we are to look in their season. But when this second object comes into view, he scatters the cloud entirely and sets up Jesus Himself. Now the Apostle commands us to "turn our eyes from them and fix them upon Jesus Christ." As if to say: "If you will indeed see a sight once for all, look to Him." The saints, though they are guides to us, are but followers of Him. He is the arch-guide, the leader of them and of us all. Look to Him. There is a time when James may say: "Take my brethren the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example," but when Jesus comes forth, who said, "I have given you an example," an example above all others, then let all flesh be silent before the Lord.”*This book is not so harsh as it seems in these couple of quotes, but as a Puritan pastor with an eye on his congregation’s soul along with the greater church he didn’t mince words in any way. And again he exhorts, *“The soul without Jesus Christ is an enemy to the God of peace, a stranger to the covenant of peace, incapable of receiving the Word of peace, and alienated from the way of peace. ‘There is no peace to the wicked,’ saith my God.”*Overall it is very pastoral in nature calling God’s people to do what they should be doing…looking to Jesus rather than ANYTHING in the world. One last quote on this, *“Consider that it is a command of Christ that we should look to Jesus. “Behold me, behold me; lo, I, lo, I.” This command is not only backed with authority but also accompanied by special ordinances appointed to this end.”*I am moving on to Book 2 now because monergism just came out with that one.**

**7.    LOOKING UNTO JESUS, The Alpha and the Omega, or the Soul's Eyeing of Jesus, as carrying on the Great Work of Man's Salvation, from First to Last. Book 2, by Isaac Ambrose (originally published in 1680 -post-humorously- Monergism 2024). Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664).  He wants to be clear to his readers that we must look to Jesus the beginner and finisher of our faith who is the Alpha and Omega of creation and redemption consequent ly we must look to Him. This is a great assurance and a source of hope for us as he points out that since BEFORE the beginning He has been is and will to the end make sure that every one of His brought HOME as He promised. His main texts: Isaiah 45:22- *“Turn (Look unto me…KJV) to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!,*Hebrew 12:1-2- *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God*; and Revelation 1:8,17- *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty… “Fear not, I am the first and the last…”*It is around these texts that he proves his point of our need and our desire to be looking unto Jesus. He quotes from many others along the way as any good Puritan but he does not reference them. The author need not give Scriptural address… he like so many others in that day assume their readers will know or know how to find the passage. No google to help only their own memories and knowledge of the scriptures. This particular book was to see how the Savior was working before time until the creation for His own. Looking at the benefit of Christ’s work he says, *“There is a difference between hope and faith. Hope regards what the Word promises (res verbi), while faith respects the Word itself (verbum rei). Hope focuses on the mercy and goodness of the promise; faith fixes upon the authority and truth of the Promiser. Hope looks to the future, while faith considers the object as present.* *Both apply personally to the believer, but hope waits expectantly, while faith enjoys presently. Thus, faith is called “the substance of things hoped for,” because it gives confidence in things hoped for, as if they were already in hand. Faith grants the soul a present interest in God, in Christ, and in the glorious truths of the Gospel, even eternal life itself.* *Martin Luther, observing the many promises in Scripture, said: “The whole of Scripture especially aims at this: that we should not doubt, but rather hope, confide, and believe that God is merciful, kind, patient, and delights in saving our souls*.”…and this all began with Christ work with the Father and the holy Spirit before time. My hope is that they will print more sections from his volumes like these two.**

**8.    A CHRISTMAS CAROL: A Ghost Story for Christmas, by Charles Dickens (originally published in 1843 and has been re-published multiple times through the year. After watching the George C. Scott version of A Christmas Carol movie this last Christmas I determined to re-read this story again just to see how far off the movies are. I dare say…they are not that far off actually.  One of the things that DOES stand out that is different that at the end of the first Spirt and by the beginning of the second spirit Scrooge is already a changed man in the book where as in the movies he is still pretty obnoxious and testy of the Spirits.  And by the time the third spirit comes he is completely sold out even before all the dreaded things that occur to shake him to the core. *“Ghost of the Future! he exclaimed, I fear you more than any specter I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me? It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them. Lead on! said Scrooge. “Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!”*Also, every time I read this book I am surprised at how quickly it is over…one because it is written so well and two because it is in fact short. Depending on the version the length is between 60 and 70 pages. Dickens of course was always quick to point out the baser side of the fallenness of man but here we see redemption.  This book was first published on December 19th, 1843 and by Christmas Eve of that year it was sold out. It has never been out of print and has been translated into several languages…for it is a story for the ages.  It strikes a chord with all of us at one time or another and given that we are image-bearers of God… a redemption story gets us every time. I always love the way it ends*…“Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him. He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!”***

**9.       THE DESPICABLE DOZEN: Bad Guys of the Bible, by Timothy Mulder (2024). Wow, what a ride! Tim’s writing gets better with each book or maybe this was just a favorite of his because he had me from the beginning. Some of the “Despicables” were obvious like Pharaoh, Herod the Great and Judas…others not so much like Delilah, Antipas and Pontius Pilate. Shouldn’t someone like David be numbered among these…well he answers that easily. Now there is much to commend about this book. First, the subject matter is not something you would naturally think about. Despicables? Who wants to read about them? But once started you want to finish. Second, the comparisons with the despicable sins of these folks and our own. I was stopped more than once to ask…Do I do that? Tim points out the sin that is common to all mankind and then how Jesus’ blood takes care of the sting of death for His own. Third, while a small book overall, it is filled with theological truths that once again make you notice something more from an ancient text*. “When Adam sinned, his punishment was difficulty in cultivating the ground. When Cain sinned, his punishment was worse than Adam’s: Cain was driven from the ground. According to verse 12 the ground would no longer yield crops to Cain. The natural environment no longer automatically favors humanity as God intended; it is now hostile, and the degree of this hostility is determined in some measure by the extent of human unrighteousness.”*I especially liked his chapter on King Saul and the excuses that he gave…excuses that I have given myself. *“It was only after Samuel’s condemnation that Saul confessed his sin. However, he still failed to repent. Saul displayed worldly sorrow instead of godly sorrow. As noted in our study of Cain, worldly sorrow says, ‘I’m sorry I got caught.’ Godly sorrow says, ‘I’m sorry I have sinned.’ Worldly sorrow involves external obedience only. Godly sorrow involves the heart.”*But I thoroughly enjoy the masterpieces depicting biblical events at the beginning of each chapter which seemed to connect the ages. These could easily be turned into mini-sermons making these extremely readable and then the Minecraft reference was simply hilarious. This is yet another book to recommend to anyone wanting insight into sin and the salvation of our Lord for His own.**

**10.  THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH: Edinburgh Edition,  by Westminster Ministers (name such as Thomas Goodwin, William Cooper, Thomas Manton Roger drake Henry Wilkerson, Ralph Venning, Thomas Watson and Obadiah Lee just to name a few of the 44 or so men who put this together. 1645, by Monergism 2015). This 1500 page Confession includes multiple more proof texts for each section of the Confession of faith than you find coming directly out of Westminster.  The Scots always felt there needed to be more precision in the proof text.  In many cases the additions are better than the settled one from the Assembly at Westminster. All he “normal” sections that we have in our Confession are there along with a few letters of historical significance in the preface. Along with the Confession, of course, one finds the Larger and Shorter Catechism with once again multiple more proof texts. This is the version one should have if they are wanting better than adequate proof texts for the catechism. This book also includes the Sum of Saving Knowledge (1650) which is brief summary of Christian Doctrine contained in the Bible and set out by Westminster for its practical use as a short form of the important doctrines for the lay person. This is not found in today’s versions though it was an important part of the Scottish Reformed literary heritage. Also, found within this book is the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant.  The first being signed to bind by many from the Church of Scotland to oopse some of the reforms put forth by King Charles I. The latter was an agreement between the Scottish Covenanters and the English Parliament to bind the church of Scotland, England and Ireland together in 1643 necessitating the Westminster Assembly which produced the Confession of Faith. Also this document acknowledges the many sins and disloyalties that occurred after the unity took place under the National Covenant and then the Solemn League and Covenant. And finally like our Book of Church order this book concludes with The Directory of Public Worship which the Scottish Church adhered for years. Next is included the form of Government section call the Form of Presbyterial Church- Government. And then lastly the Directory of family Worship highlighting the need for catechism within the church and the family. Actually the last thing is an extensive index of words which is almost worth the price of the book which is free from Monergism.**

**11.  LAUGHTER AND LAMENT: The Radical Freedom of Joy and Sorrow by Steve Brown (2022 New Growth Press). This book is sooo different than Mark Vroegop’s Dark Clouds- Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament but then that is to be expected. Steve Brown is an 85 year old power house of faith, but he wouldn’t want me to say that because it might go to his head. He has an encyclopedia of resources to pull from, from people and events and he quotes them all.  His biblical exposition is second to none. And his desire to reach the heart of everyone is unquestioned…knowing that everyone won’t listen or care…but since he is old now he doesn’t care how many people he offends with the truth of the gospel. He is unapologetic in his discourse. He is honest with people. *“We have a whole generation of people with unresolved issues, hurts and pains in their past that have been shallowly dealt with at best, and at worst have been ignored and discounted completely. The result has been an increasingly shallow Christianity and a profound lack of understanding of the nature of God and how, as His people, we are to move and live in a fallen world. We do not know ourselves. And while we know a lot about God, we do not truly know Him. We have been unwilling to sit in our sadness and pain, and we have missed much of the intimacy that he longs to offer us…“It’s strange that Christians who belong to a club founded by Jesus should believe that we won’t face the same kinds of things. Lament is there in the Bible because there is a reason for lament. A lament is the dark agony of our souls when we express to God the depth of our pain, fear, and doubt. It is, in the Psalms, for instance, where one uses the words of God to cry out to God from the darkness. Don’t Be Surprised by Lament. Lament should not be a surprise to believers. Jesus said to his disciples, I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. (John 16: 1–4) I don’t know about you, but Jesus’s words aren’t exactly good PR for following Christ.””* Laughter and Lament are highlighted together because in Steve’s world of 5 or 6 decades of ministry they in fact do go together. You hardly ever go to a funeral where there isn’t laughter and tears sometimes at the same time over the one lost. They are meant to go together so all through the book he keeps them together helping us to understand that true lament doesn’t happen without laughter at some point. Some of what he says is radical and some believe blasphemous…but it is just that he is willing to say what others have too much pride to say. He is also clear of the role of repentance within these two, *“Repentance may lead to change (and often does) or it may not lead to change, but that isn’t what repentance is. The word comes from a Greek word, meaning “a change of mind.” It is not an action, but an attitude. It is the recognition of who God is (holy, righteous, sovereign, and good) and who you are (not holy, righteous, sovereign, and good) and going to God with it. The natural demeanor of repentance is lament.”*I will leave with this last quote, *“It’s one of the reasons my friend, the late Larry Crabb, said that when we face the dark that we shouldn’t run away from it, but run to it. In fact, he suggested that we probe it until Jesus shows.”***

**12.  COURAGE, COMMITMENT, FAITH, Tales from the Coalition Defense Force volume 3, by Daniel Gibbs Steve Rzasa, and Gary T. Stevens.  Three short stories that continue the legacy of the story line of the Coalition Defense Force. The first story could begin this way, “have you heard the one about a maintenance tech and the Marine on the Sagittarius Arch Space station…how they saved the galaxy from pirates?” PO Ned Obasanjo and Corp. Ari Conway were simply having a day of maintenance guy being protected by his Marine because of all the screwy things that had happened on the station over the last year when they happen upon a “deal” with Lex Gold (the stations Quark fro Deep Space Nine) and some pirates gone bad.  Well, they took matters in their own hands since communications were being block and set about a rescue to Mr. Gold. The rescue was one for the books with just enough slapstick to keep you wanting more. The next Story deal with a young (2nd Lt.) James Henry(whom we will know by the title Admirable of the Independent Defense Force, but that is getting ahead of things or more likely going back to get some more back story).  Any way, he is truly green only out of the Academy 6 months. This is his first mission and the mission is to scuttle one of the newest ships in the fleet before Leaguers can get her and strip her of parts. Anyway, sort of like the first story…everything appeared to be going well…when the Leaguers attacked in force and they, in the process of setting charges to scuttle the ship, are pounced upon by a superior force and now they must fight.  It is up to one member of the crew to make the ultimate sacrifice to accomplish the mission.  Mission success is always the goal bringing everyone home but the missions success wouldn’t be completed this time starting a long line of memories for the young LT under his commands.  The third story involves the Little Sisters of Divine Recompense (a para-military group sanctioned by the Vatican for non-lethal force when able…lethal force as a last result.) specifically Sister Simone Darzi and her first major mission as a Sister of the order. They have been called to a planet to protect some of the Catholic churches being attacked by a “demon.” Well, the whole story deals with slavers, and the churches involved in freeing slaves and one of the main families of slavers fighting back most of which neither the order or the Vatican knew about at the time. Of course, the mission becomes very complicated and just as the Sisters are trapped and may have to fight to the death they received help from a completely unexpected place. *“Deputy Marshal Luca Harper would solve the riddle. Or else. Maybe I’ll cross paths with those nuns again. That was something he looked forward to, even if the odds were quite slim. Luca walked on.”*These stories simply add to the delight of those of us who enjoy reading about these characters and places we have come to know.**

**13.  CHAOS ATERNUS (The Aternien Wars Book 10), By G.J. Ogden (2024). Wow, a great ending…or beginning of his series. I say beginning because…oh well, one would have to read the story to find out why I said that. Rose and Monique and Carina…Admiral Krantz have all devised a fool-proof plan to finally Apophis the God-King of Aternus that is two personalities in one Markus Aternus and Nathan Clyne which is more evil is hard to say. But the fool proof plan is set into motion with the Galatine even being resurrected to take on the most powerful ship in the Aternien armada. When Carter saw his old ship,*“Carter was again reminded of the story of King Arthur and the Lady of the Lake. That mythical, water-dwelling enchantress famously gifted Arthur with the magic sword, Excalibur. Less well known, however, was that the Lady also gave a second sword, one arguably even more powerful than its famous counterpart. King Arthur’s nephew, Sir Gawain, one of the most renowned Knights of the Round Table, received this sword. Its name was Galatine.”*  Now the final battle begins…but all fool proof plans in battle always come unglued as this one does…but the true plan emerges and Apophis is finally defeated and the two entities are separated so that “balance” can be restored to the universe and the Aterniens and the humans can live in peace if they will. Oh after the battle is almost as exciting as the battle. Monique offers carter a Kingship and ascension…Carina is the Master Commander of the Galantine. Cai actually gets to be with his kids as he takes over for Carter who actually retires and heads home to his Terra Nine cabin and then it is there that the sparks begin to fly.  Again the writing is superb always keeping the reader on the edge of their seat. The character development of all including the master robots lead to many funny and painful encounters as these folks almost become family. Ogden is a Master Writer but I wish he didn’t feel the need to throw in the occasional “F” word. My favorite writers like Daniel Gibbs, and Toby Neighbors and Scott Bartlett and Jeffery Haskell don’t go down that rabbit trail. But all and all worth the time I put into it. Extremely entertaining.**

**14.  SPURGEON’S PRAYERS PERSONALIZED by Charles H. Spurgeon (copy write 1870’s restored by Monergism 2022). 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. They “personalized” these pages by takin gout the Elizabethan language and replacing it with contemporary language without losing the truly Spurgeon flair. They also took out specific references to London or to he Queen which are left in in The Pastor in Prayer which I read last year. These prayers are taken from other books like C.H. Spurgeon’s Prayers, The Pastor in Prayer and Behold the Throne of Grace. Reading the prayers of our fathers in the faith is comforting and encouraging, but also convicting. For these prayers especially Spurgeon’s exposes the deficiency in my own prayers…not Scriptural enough or maybe just too shallow. His prayers compare with what we see in the Bible which tells us just how well he knew the Bible. He calls us to repentance with the same fervor he calls unbelievers to faith- this is asking god to move in the hearts of the non-believers he was a Calvinist after all. LOL!  *“O God, You are our God. Early in life many of us were brought to put our trust in You, and since then You have been our God in many and many an experience. We have been in troubles often, but You have always been our Helper. We have been in danger, but He that keeps Israel hath neither slumbered nor slept. We can truly say this morning, "Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice." What a God You have been to us in our experience—so tender over our weakness, ever teaching us little by little as we have been able to bear it; so long-suffering with our follies... and comforting without measure. We would now in our prayers come; as we came at first would we come again; we would renew our vows, we would again repeat our repentance and our faith, and then look at the brazen serpent and touch but the border of Your garment. We would begin again. O, Lord, help us to do it in sincerity and truth. And first we do confess that we are by nature lost and by practice ruined. We are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We would lie at those dear pierced feet bleeding at heart because of sin, wounded, mangled, crushed by the fall and by our own transgression. We confess that if You should number our sins upon us and deal with us accordingly we should be sent to the lowest hell. We have no merit, no claim, no righteousness of our own. Oh! now, dear Savior, we look up to You. Oh! that some might look for the first time, and those of us that have long looked would fix our happy gaze again upon that blessed substitutionary sacrifice wherein is all our hope.”*I wanted to give you just a taste of these amazing prayers that can be had on line for free.**

***15.*APPROACHING GOD: Accepting the Invitation to Stand in the Presence of God, by Steve Brown (First written in 1996, and then revised and updated in 2008). This is the 3rd time I have read this book. I first read this book the year that Zachary died and quickly forgot everything I had read after Zachary’s death and was too concerned with it that I didn’t pick it up again until it was updated and revised in 2008. It is a tremendous book for those who don’t mind a bit of humor when talking about such things as prayer and ones relationship with the Lord. *“For those of you who are afraid to pray because you are afraid he might not be there, I have some very good news: I’ve checked, and he’s really there. For those of you who won’t pray because you are afraid he might be there, I have some rather disturbing* *news: You have every reason to be disturbed—and overjoyed. He’s there, he’s really there!”*I have been studying prayer again and using the prayers of Spurgeon and others in my devotional until I started working through Psalm 119 again. And if you are going to study prayer, in my opinion, this is one of the books that you need. (And, of course, there are literally hundreds of books on prayer). Steve likes to tells stories and in this updated version there are historical accounts as well as personal ones from people that have written into his radio program and there are quotes galore: *“F. W. Faber said: We must wait for God, long, meekly, in the wind and wet, in the thunder and lightning, in the cold and the dark. Wait, and He will come. He never comes to those who do not wait. When He comes, go with Him, but go slowly, fall a little behind; when He quickens His pace, be sure of it before you quicken yours. But when He slackens, slacken at once and do not be slow only, but silent, very silent, for He is God.”* He gets down to the root causes for our having a hard time with prayer and the problem we have we unanswered prayer*. “Almost always when I talk to people about prayer, they tell me they don’t pray because they aren’t good enough and that God doesn’t want to hear from people as sinful as they are. Listen to me, and never forget what I’m going to tell you: it isn’t your sin that causes God to be far away. The vicarious atonement of Christ takes care of sin. But stiffness—now that will kill your prayer life every time. You say, “But you don’t know what I’ve done.” I don’t care what you’ve done. That is never the problem. I’ve been a pastor for a whole bunch of years, and there isn’t much (if anything) you can tell me that I haven’t heard before or that will shock me. I’ve heard it all. I’ve cleaned up after more suicides than I can remember and listened to more confessions than a district attorney, and sin is hardly ever the real problem. The real problem is stiffness…“Listen to what the Bible says: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises” (Heb. 11: 13). Now that is an honest statement of reality. Tell your friends who say the Bible is unrealistic to put that in their pipes and smoke it. The Bible faces the reality of prayers that don’t get answered, of needs that aren’t met, and pain that is not healed… The next time your urgent prayers aren’t answered in the way you would like them to be answered, ask yourself three questions: (1) has God loved me? (2) has he demonstrated that love? and (3) has he ever lied to me? The proper answers to those questions won’t make the pain go away, but they will remind you that he is there, that he knows what he is doing, and that, even if you don’t understand, he does.”*I am glad I have read this agin…to laugh and cry with God is essential to the life of a believer…this book reminds us of that.**

***16.*HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER’S STONE, by J.K. Rowling (1998). As  pick this up again after a longer hiatus than I thought (last read in 2022) I am once again thrilled by the ride it puts me on…much like the roller coaster at Gringott’s Treasury. The first time I read this I had found it for free book from Kindle via Prime so I picked up the whole series and I don’t have to return it (cool huh) … and each time since I continue to find it to be a fun read and freeing.  I try to read these every couple of years but here I am in 2025. It is not the literary masterpiece in the same vein as THE LORD OF THE RINGS but it masterfully written to draw a person in and keep them wanting more. It is a story of great courage, strength, loyalty, and sacrifice.  The eleven year old Harry and his cohorts, at great sacrifice to themselves, find themselves seeking to keep Hogwarts safe from unknown forces when they discover that Lord Voldemort a dark wizard/ spirt is behind the mischief leading towards an unknown nefarious purpose. Hogwarts quickly become Harry’s home…a real place to belong, (which he has had for 11 years at the Dursley’s home) so when given the challenge he doesn’t back away though much of what he accomplishes at this early age can be contributed to “luck” yet most consider him to be a great wizard. *“Harry—you’re a great wizard, you know.” “I’m not as good as you,” said Harry, very embarrassed, as she let go of him. “Me!” said Hermione. “Books! And cleverness! There are more important things—friendship and bravery and—oh Harry*…” And as He grows it will become more and more evident that this youngster is in fact full of courage and loyalty and fortitude. I am a fan of the movies so it seemed fun to pick up these free books.  I have found out some things that were left hanging in the movies that may answer the whole question as to why things proceed as they do…specifically that Voldemort cannot be killed until or unless he takes on human form… and encountering him even in a less than powerful state isn’t pleasant …but that is enough for now. Dumbledore says to Harry, *“Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself.” “Yes, sir. Well, Voldemort’s going to try other ways of coming back, isn’t he? I mean, he hasn’t gone, has he?” “No, Harry, he has not. He is still out there somewhere, perhaps looking for another body to share . . . not being truly alive, he cannot be killed.”* Harry’s relationship with the headmaster Dumbledore keeps Harry sane and strong and secure. Fun stuff and only 322 pages or so.**

**17.  JUGGERNAUT: Starship Jericho Book 3, by Toby Neighbors (2025). Another excellent and exciting story from a really good writer. As the story of the *Jericho/ Renegade* continues to grow and expand like the size of the ship ones interest never wanes wondering just what’s around the proverbial corner. Meeting new races and battling the Imperium to save a galaxy not their own, and at the same time keeping their home galaxy safe from invasion. Captain Darius explains the trajectory of things to a new friend, *“It was never our intention to start a war, Darius said. The Correllian artifact that we call GIGI waited in the far reaches of our solar system for a long time. Eventually, it sent us the plans for a long range ship that enabled us to reach it. I was given that task with orders to return it to my people. Yet, when we took possession of the artifact, GIGI convinced me of the danger posed by the Imperium and provided a way to protect my people. This ship, Nurek said. The Correll were clever. I don’t think anyone knew they had located one of the missing Adoroni ships. Once we procured the power core on Lawash, GIGI instructed us where to go. Only after we found the ship did we realize that the long-range vessel GIGI had instructed us to build was actually part of the Renegade’s power system. We also discovered that an Imperial ship was guarding the hyperspace portal we needed to use to get back home. It left us no choice but to fight and then, suspecting that the Imperium had some way of tracking us through space, we came here to the Casa system to test our theory. The ship you fought outside the Vangori nebula placed a tracking device on this ship, Nurek said. That much I can tell you. I was not privy to all the Emperor’s intelligence, but he spoke freely around me. Dudonus slaves are non-people to the Ashi and most other advanced races. But not because you are less intelligent, Darius pointed out.”*The loss of life is tremendous not so much in numbers but in relationships lost with already so few humans on such an expansive ship. But new relationships are budding between a couple of the Space Special Force Marines as well as with new people/aliens from the planets they have helped save so maybe the ship can serve a couple of more purposes. One bringing unity and then equality for peoples of different species with a common foe and purpose. We’ll see!**

**18.  ENCOURAGMENTS OF FAITH,  by Thomas Goodwin, Monergism Copyright © 2019. This book by Monergism is a compilation of some of Thomas Goodwin’s sermons and lectures of the 17th Century with an aim to strengthen the faith of Christians who have come out of Romanism or simple unbelief. The theme verses, if you will permit are, John 6:37-38- *“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me.”* To be an encouragement he begins with some of Christ’s best encouragement to a people who have not heard that for …well maybe…never. And for us…to be reminded of it when the day gets dark and the storms are swirling and we seem so alone…either in or sin or affliction. Like all the Puritan’s at the time, Goodwin’s immense knowledge of the Scriptures linked with a heart of compassion for God’s wayward and lost people’s in need of shepherding, enables him to apply this knowledge to the everyday struggles of Christians that they might be encouraged by the Truth. Whether he is dealing with the struggles of life or perseverance of the faith all along the way he is encouraging us from the word and his pastoral expertise. And he concludes with some very encouraging truth, *“And lastly, let his actions and courses, which he has taken from the beginning of the world, speak for all the rest; as Satan has been a murderer from the beginning, so God has been a Saviour from the beginning, and Christ is the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. God began with the first of mankind, even with Adam and Eve, the ringleaders, the heads of this rebellion, who drew all the rest of the world into that enmity, these were yet reconciled…God is to this day reconciling the world of men to himself; some that walk in your streets by you, live among you. And he will have thousands when you are gone, and what are these but as flags, and patterns of mercy, hung forth by God to toll and bring others in, as Eph. 2:7. He is now praying and interceding for you, even when you are sinning; as on earth we see he did for the Jews when they were a-crucifying him. Now because he could not for this other business come himself, he therefore sends us his ambassadors, and we in Christ's stead do beseech you; and it is as if 'Christ by us did beseech you;' and we preach but such things as were 'first spoken by the Lord himself,' as it is in Heb. 2:3”*All of the to encourage our Faith!**

**19.  THE SPIRTUAL MAN’S AIM, by Richard Sibbes. Monergism Copyright © 2020.   Another masterpiece of Sibbes …a gift to the Church throughout time. Many of us would be so much stronger, wiser, and hopeful in our faith if alongside the Scriptures we read Sibbes! It is said that he had a rare gift was one of a comforter of the troubled and doubting and at the same time possessed the rare gift of illuminating every passage of scripture he handled drawing out its significance with his hearers and readers in mind. Like Goodwiin above, they understood the people of their day very well and spoke the scriptures to them in their time of need…and their words still speak. This book is a meditation on I Corinthians 7:29-31- *“This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods,  and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.”*This work has been taken from a much larger 4 Volume set of His works so that it can be consumed by God’s church…even today. His purpose as with all his works is to clearly teach God’s church of God and of who we are so that we turn on a regular basis to God taking aim at Him for our good and His glory. He always begins as Paul and points out who we are before God, *“Since the fall of man there is a curse upon all things. There is a sentence of mutability and change, and a sentence of 'passing' is passed upon all. All things that have a beginning shall have an end, and that this world shall be a stage of changes and alteration. There is a sentence of vanity upon the creature: 'The creature is subject to vanity; not of his own will, but because God hath subdued it to vanity,' Rom. 8:20. Man committed treason, and therefore the creatures, which are man's servants, all mourn for their master's fall; they all mourn in black, as it were. All the creatures are subject to vanity, all the creatures under the sun are subject to mutability and change; but we may thank ourselves, we are the grand traitors that brought the misery upon the creature…that is the true reason all things ‘pass away’.”*But he doesn’t stop there in Christ and with Christ we must, *“Labour for a sanctified use of the 'passing away' of these things, that we may provide for that which is not subject to alteration and change. The favour of God in Christ is for everlasting. The graces of God's Spirit are for everlasting. The condition of God's children is for everlasting. And therefore why should we look after perishing things, and neglect better? For a Christian hath the reality of things: he hath a husband forever, he hath matter of joy forever, he hath a possession forever; and then there will be a new world. All these things are but shows. The Christian hath the reality of all that never 'passes away.' And therefore, considering that all things else 'pass away but the things that belong to a Christian as a Christian, let Christians learn to make most of their best calling.”* Sibbes reminds throughout this short work that the time is short…*the appointed time has grown very short*…so that we don’t forget to make the best of our time on this earth for God’s glory…which is the Spiritual man’s aim!**

**20.  HARRY POTTER AND CHAMBER OF SECRETS, by J.K. Rowling (1998 then digitally by Pottermore 2015). Once again, reading for pleasure as I have been sick with the flu this time iinstead of Covid.  I wonder where the flu went during Covid? Well, just like last time the young Mr. Potter is growing into his own, however... still struggling in his person, with Ron and Hermione and Malfoy and Filtch and a scary character from 50 years ago teaching him about such things as Pure bloods, Mud bloods, and Squibs. The mystery in this one takes the reader to a point of deep stress for how it plays on the emotions of Harry and Ginny Weasley as the ones who here from Tom Riddle from beyond.. But through it all Harry is also trying to discover where the voices are coming from, that only he can hear, and why his scare burns so…and when he finds out he comes face to face with his arch rival, in a place that most people didn’t believe existed…again, but in a different form from the one that he had already encountered (a bit of time travel and magic all rolled into one). And, of course, in the end saving the day once again. It is so nice to have great endings where the hero wins over evil…since so much of our days seems to have evil triumphing…or is that what we think we see…just like Harry, Ron and Hermione. One of my favorite quotes, *"It only put me in Gryffindor,” said Harry in a defeated voice, “because I asked not to go in Slytherin...Exactly, said Dumbledore, beaming once more. Which makes you very different from Tom Riddle. It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities. Harry sat motionless in his chair, stunned."* This book was a slow read the first time through because I was expecting more…but the character development that I noticed the second and now third time and now the fourth through is wonderful. All in all with great anticipation even After the fourth time through I push on to the Prisoner of Azkaban.**

**21.  WORLD WAR II PEARL HARBOR: A History From Beginning to End (World War 2 Battles), Copyright © 2018 by Hourly History. This is one of literally hundreds of little books (40-100 pages books) produced by Hourly History that give a brief but concise history of events and people.  These help the readers to get just enough information about a subject to want to begin their search for more. These book are also good for the arm-chair historian to simply bone up on the highlights of a particular event.  Well worth the read. This one in particular highlights also the day in the life of a Pearl Harbor survivor and the fight for recognition for another who saved their lives long after that sailors death. The quotes most often quoted are also found here. When the US was still whirling from the sneak attack by Japan without a Declaration of War the news had already traveled across the globe. *“Winston Churchill learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the prime minister of the beleaguered British immediately realized what this meant. He had been despondent over his nation’s prospects for victory. But Pearl Harbor changed everything ‘So, we had won after all! . . . We had won the war. England would live; Britain would live. . . . How long the war would last or in what fashion it would end no man could tell, nor did I at this moment care . . . We should not be wiped out. Our history would not come to an end. We might not even have to die as individuals. Hitler’s fate was sealed. Mussolini’s fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder. All the rest was merely the proper application of overwhelming force.”* Though the US had done everything to avoid war…by the attack on our sovereign soil there was no doubt in Churchill’s in that moment. that WWII was won. And of course, after General Yamamoto, the mastermind behind the attack, heard that a declaration of war had *NOT*been made when he had been assured that it would be *BEFORE* the attack he said or wrote these famous words, *“I fear we have awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve.”* Yamamoto spent the day in depression. He disapproved of the fact that the attack took place while the two countries were at peace. The sneak attack, he knew, would infuriate the Americans and galvanize them into retaliation. That is the resolve that we saw after the 9/11attack and it is that resolve that will see us through …God help us!**

***22.*HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN, by J.K. Rowling (1999). I love how this book opens, *"Harry Potter was a highly unusual boy in many ways. For one thing, he hated the summer holidays more than any other time of year. For another, he really wanted to do his homework but was forced to do it in secret, in the dead of night. And he also happened to be a wizard."*Harry is learning a lot…the hard way…through extreme difficulty and trial…which is how most of us learn the lessons that matter…the ones that stay with us forever. Harry meets someone he never expects to meet and the outcome is beyond his wildest dreams. The prisoner of Azkaban gives Harry much more than he bargained for. Harry comes face to face with his past in this book and comes out wiser and stronger than ever before…and happier I might add with a lot more chocolate. Chocolate, it seems, helps cure everything…something that I have always wondered about but never had confirmed even if this a wizarding world thing…I’ll take that recommendation! Dumbledore says to Harry near the end of this wild ride of a book, *“Hasn’t your experience with the Time-Turner taught you anything, Harry? The consequences of our actions are always so complicated, so diverse, that predicting the future is a very difficult business indeed. . . . Professor Trelawney, bless her, is living proof of that. . . . You did a very noble thing, in saving Pettigrew’s life.”* This book takes many twists and turns and keeps your attention from start to finish and your heart is warmed by its outcome. Dumbledore says to Harry near the end, *"You think the dead we have loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don’t recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that particular Patronus? Prongs rode again last night."* As we end the book it sounds like it will be a pretty good holiday after all with an addition that adds to the Dursleys fears…but dark clouds are rising on the horizon…as usual.**

**23.  HARRY POTTER: THE GOBLET OF FIRE, By J.K. Rowling (2000). These book are such a good read.  Entertainment, of course…but they are also telling of how we as people need to always be on our guard and how important community is. When Harry seeks to do things on his own, things don’t go so well…but with his friends…that have the same values…things go well and Voldemort is put off. But as this book begins, Harry is excited...he gets to go to the International Quidditch Cup…leaving behind the Dursleys for the summer and getting to hang out with his “family” the Weasleys but then things a turn for the worse…as you would expect because of the trouble that follows *“the boy who lived.”* So begins another turbulent but “fun” account of the on-going life of the young and maturing wizard Harry Potter.  The antics of Ron, Hermione and him continue to explore the wizarding world revealing that there is a nefarious force alive and well in their midst. And then there is the Tri-wizard Tournament…aka the Quad-wizard Tournament taking front and center on everyone’s mind especially since Harry is now one of the champions. In the midst of this event is the lot of them getting thrown out of the kitchen by the house-elves taking offense to Hermione trying to “free” them from their lot. She has started S.P.E.W.- which stands for the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare or as Ron will later call it*, “the House-Elf Liberation Front”!* And then comes the Christmas Ball…oh, the learning that goes on there for these young teenagers in a more “innocent” time. What fun…what intrigue…what sadness and along the way from beginning to the end life lessons abound from this book for Potter and his entourage, such as, *"If you want to know what a man’s like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals.”*, along with revelations that will shake, sharpen and solidify the wizarding world at its core. Professor Dumbledore says *"I say to you all, once again —in the light of Lord Voldemort’s return, we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. Lord Voldemort’s gift for spreading discord and enmity is very great. We can fight it only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open."*Not to over spiritualize, but Christians would do well to remember this same thought concerning our fallen nature and the influence of Satan in these last days.**

**24.  HARRY POTTER AND THE SECRET OF CHARACTERS: Profile character of all main and famous characters of Hogwarts Universe (HARRY POTTER WORLD Book 1), by Achyutanand Upadhyay, (Published in New Delhi by Star Covers 2012…republish in hardback 2018).  This is one of a multi-volume (6 book) set of books to help readers and fans of Harry Potter to get to know the characters, that magic, the ghosts of Hogwarts, the wizarding pets in the series, potions, magical artifacts and the reasons why everyone does what they do. In some versions it is another of the animated works that move when you read them like the pictures in the Harry Potter Universe. This work was developed and carried out in India. It is almost like trading card as he gives all the pertinent information…wand size, birthdate, bloodline status and other interesting information pulled from the accepted canon and known by all fans but put here in an easily accessible guide to be recalled easier. Interesting little read especially if your kindle version can do the animation.**

**25.  HARRY POTTER AND THE POWEFUL WIZARDS: Exploring Characters of the Wizarding Realm (HARRY POTTER WORLD Book 2), by Achyutanand Upadhyay (Published in New Delhi by Star Covers 2012…republish in hardback 2018). These small book (70 plus pages depending upon formatting) are a wealth if information about the characters of both the original series as well as Cursed Child. The author certainly has some cross over iin the first 2 books which I would say is a weakness in this series so far but the additional information on Voldemort and Umbridge and others helps the reader be more aware of the characters. His work on Bellatrix Lestrange, James and Lily Potter are most helpful along with the extra characters information provided for “Tonks” Slughorn and Moody. He also highlights Gellert Grindelwald and others like Barty Crouch Jr. with information that I was unaware of before reading this material.  All his material is easily verifiable when you know what questions to ask so as I yet I have nothing negative to say about his work other than perhaps it is too short.**

**26.  THE POETIC WONDER OF ISAAC WATTS (Long Line of Godly Men Profile), by Douglas Bond © 2013 Published by Reformation Trust Publishing a division of Ligonier Ministries. I read this when it first came out and had forgotten how much I had forgotten.  Isaac Watts was a non-conformist Calvinist pastor in London following John Owen, but he was the Church’s best hymnist as well outside of the Psalms of the Bible and his theology permeated everything that he wrote and taught. Douglas Bond writes*, “For Watts, there was no “cold logic” to Calvinism. Calvinism was merely the theological name that had attached itself to the biblical truths that filled Watts with wonder, love, and gratitude at the immensity of free grace. Watts believed Calvinism was worth singing about because it was the theological glue that gave glory to the grace of God in Christ for the salvation of sinners.* *All of his learning had been in the Reformed and Calvinist tradition, so he was merely attempting to urge a continuity between Christ-centered, Reformed preaching and Reformed singing in worship.”* His hymns are so rich in covenantal theology that they were among favorites for the Church and for home worship for hundreds of years. Along with this Bond makes this point throughout the book, *“Every Christian who cares about living a life of praise will want his sung worship to be guided by Watts’ heart, mind, and poetic devotion. Why? Because Watts was consumed with wonder at Jesus Christ, the supreme object of Christian worship.”*He was born in 1674 and went home to be with the Lord in 1748. He was disturbed by the singing in the church from an early age and was known to tell his father about it as they walked home from church and finally his father said if you think you could do better write a hymn…and at 14 he did and it was used in the church the very next week and was a favorite among the church goers. Again Bond writes*, “Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady, who produced a collection of psalm versifications in 1696. There is no question that these were often awkward, and many of them were virtually unsingable. So Watts borrowed the redemptive-historical hermeneutic employed by the best preachers and developed from it a method of poetically interpreting and applying the Psalms for singing in worship. His defense of his method indicates that Watts wanted the Old Testament to be understood in light of its fulfillment in Christ.”*We have 31 of his 700 plus or minus hymns in our hymnal which is a testimony to its richness and there theological content. Bond writes, *“Watts eventually would write some seven hundred hymns, of which most hymnals include only twenty or thirty. To be blunt, many of his hymns are gawky and* *crude. But Wesley wrote six thousand hymns, and we sing still fewer of his than Watts’.”* Watts was the pioneer; he was launching into uncharted poetic and liturgical depths. He did what had not been allowed to be done…the versification of the Psalter which ended up making the Psalms singable.*”* *In the best of the Divine Songs, Watts effectively and memorably employs poetry in the instruction of sometimes weighty theological truths, as in this quatrain on the work of Christ:     
  
He honored all His Father’s laws,*  
*Which we have disobeyed;*  
*He bore our sins upon the cross,*  
*And our full ransom paid.***

***In everything he wrote, Watts was in the business of employing his pen precisely to aid immature minds.”* We sing many of his hymns even today, like, Our God, Our Help in Ages Past, When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, Alas and Did My savior Bleed, Joy to the World and Jesus Shall Reign to name a few. Douglas Bond in this book brings us face to face with the best of Watts so that we do not lose him to history but continue to worship God as God intends. *“Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned from Watts’ poetry is his understanding of how we read and interpret all of Scripture; Watts, like Spurgeon and the best preachers of the past and present, made a beeline for the cross, and so must we. The enduring demonstration of this tendency of Watts is seen in the best of his psalm versifications, appropriate for the sung worship of all Christians, ‘where’er the sun doth his successive journeys run.’ May we, like Watts, read and understand our Bibles by seeking to find Christ on every page. May we then sing with Watts ‘the wonders of his love.’ And may we know the sufficiency of Christ’s arm alone, and that in Him our defense is unshakably secure.”***

**27.  THE PLIGHT OF MAN AND THE POWER OF GOD, by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) (This book was derived from lectures given in the Assembly Hall of the Free Church College, Edinburgh during the second week in March, 1941.) He was the presiding minster at Westminster Chapel in London from 1938-1968).  It has been said many times that one of his main missions in life was to preach Christ with an emphasis on the desperate plight of man and the power of God to save.  He preached and wrote unabashedly on the sovereignty Of God in the salvation of sinners must to the chagrin of those who would rather point to pragmatism, programs and self-help books for us to find peace and hope. His text for this series of sermons and lectures come from Romans 1:16-32…expositing each of the texts to make his point of the plight of man without God and the power of God in salvation for His elect. He was preaching and lecturing during the early days of WWII through to its end and the way he describes British culture as far as how it views God and the scriptures speaks volumes for how we in America view it today…giving lip service…going to church but not being effected by what we learn there because we are so caught up in ourselves and our own gospel. He states at one point, *“.  It is man's pride that has cause the decline and fall of mankind from the knowledge of God. ‘They became vain in their imaginations (reasoning’s) and their foolish heart was darkened.  Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.’  In other words, the final step is to reject God's revelation altogether and to substitute their own ideas and reasoning’s instead.* *It is due first to the inherent rebelliousness in man's nature, ‘When they knew God they glorified Him not as God.’  Men resent the very idea of God and feel that it means and implies that their liberty is somehow curtailed.  They believe that they are fit to be "masters of their fate and captains of their souls," and believing that, they demand the right to manage themselves.* *Man himself has become the standard, and nothing must be imposed upon him from the outside.”* To me he speaks volumes as he winds his way through a text that we all need to be pressed back to every now and again so that we might evaluate where we are at that moment for our fallen nature, the culture and Satan keep drawing us away. I will leave this review with some of his final word. *“It has become the hallmark of culture and learning to be irreligious or anti-religious.  Nay, further, to believe in the Gospel is regarded as one of the greatest hindrances to true progress and development.  Salvation is to be found, according to the modem man, in the full use of the human capacities and powers which can he trained by knowledge and education.  Man must save himself; man can save himself.  He has it within him to do so.  That is the essence of the modem creed. With this being true, may God grant that we may find ourselves among the blessed throng.  We have but to believe on Him, to yield ourselves to Him, and begin to make of Him our only boast here and now, and it is assured.”***

**28.  HARRY POTTER:THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX, J.K. Rowling (2003). Harry’s days as a student at Hogwarts’s School of Magic seem to be numbered. No one from the Ministry of Magic wants to listen to what he has to say…in fact, they want him out of the picture all together, hence the entrance of the Dementor’s who are called up by (Spoiler Alert: Delores Umbridge though no one seems to know that except maybe Dumbledore) to do him in, because harry is seen by the M of M as trying to undermine their authority. When that fails…those around him that he trusts most seem to not want to listen him as well…so as usual he seeks to take matters into his own hands. In fact, there was so much of this that it becomes annoying as you read. You sit there and say most of the things Harry has dealt with in his young age have been more than most adult or even wizards and witches will ever have to deal with…so the fact that he may be traumatized and act out should not come as a surprise. But even those who were with him for some of it seem to be saying to him “Get a grip, mate.” Even after the trauma of Cedric’s death and Voldemort’s return, the adults (the adults of the Order as well as those who are against the Order and don’t want to admit the obvious) around Harry act as most adults are prone to do: (1)They over protect and keep the one traumatized out of the loop...(2) They seek to deny the event by not talking about it at all... delegitimizing the account of the one traumatized...(3)They even go so far as to either call the person a liar because they don’t want to admit the truth of the event or they make the victim feel guilty in how they interpret the event. Or maybe, (4) Dumbledore knew he should have said something sooner but kept putting it off thinking, at the time, it would be better for everyone especially Harry. In fact, the book is full of people taking things into their hands and taking others for granted without regard for the consequences which leads at least in one case to a dire ending. (We lose an important character in this book!) There are a few moments where we see the trio (Harry, Ron and Hermione) stopping and maturing beyond themselves (they are teenagers after all) with Neville, as they discover what happened to Neville’s parents and where they are (something the Harry had discovered the year before in Dumbledore’s office.) However, in the end, there is always Dumbledore with a calming effect even when Harry doesn’t want to be calmed any more. At one point Dumbledore says to Harry during His long explanation and apology for not being more communicative, *“There is no shame in what you are feeling, Harry. On the contrary . . . the fact that you can feel pain like this is your greatest strength.”*This would have reminded Harry of another talk that he and Dumbledore had with Harry, when the differences between him and Lord Voldemort were pointed out. As usual this book has a number of twists and turns that keeps the reader entertained and spellbound (pun intended). This book is almost 900 pages long but felt like one of the much smaller ones because of all the action and intrigue throughout.**

**29.  THE GOSPEL MINISTRY: An Address to Ministers and Students of Theology, by John Brown of Haddington (1722-1787 Scottish minister and author, this publishing was in 1864, Monergism Copyright © 2023). The preface to this book is written by a preached in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1864 and He commended this book highly for all ministers in the pulpit and those endeavoring to go to the pulpit by God’s call as he had been influenced by the book 40 years prior to this publishing in 1864. He also stated that he goes back to this book on a regular basis when he evaluates his call and ministry. I have now placed this on my “read regularly” list. For I evaluate my call and ministry every yea (sometimes more depending upon the hardship that has arisen). Like Brown’s Systematic Theology these were standard texts in seminaries or in churches training future pastors for almost 200 years…and they need to find their way back….especially this one on the Gospel Ministry.  We often talk about future leaders (TE’s and RE’s) reading Richard Baxter’s THE REFORMED PASTOR…I do read that with regularity…but I had I run across this one first this one would have been my go to book. It is succinct and clear about the privileges, the abuses, and its desire to help men realize “IF” they are called or not for many should not pursue ministry who do. All through the book you see that his strength he is in his probing questions, *“What distinct knowledge have you of the mysteries of the kingdom? What aptness have you to teach, bringing out of the good treasure of your own heart things new and old? (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:2). What ability to make the deep mysteries of the Gospel plain to persons of weak capacities, and to represent things delightful or terrible in a proper and affecting manner? What proper quickness in conceiving divine things; and what rooted inclination to study the, as persons devoted to matters of infinite importance? What peculiar fitness have you for the pulpit, qualifying you, in a plain, serious, orderly, and earnest manner, to press the truths of God into the consciences of your hearers? (Isaiah 50:4; 49:2). With what stock of self-experienced truths and texts of inspiration did, or do you enter on the ministerial work? Of what truths, relative to the law of God, or relative to sin, Satan, or the desertions and terrors of God, has your soul not only seen the evidence but felt the power?* *Take heed that your call from Christ and His Spirit to your ministerial work be not only real but evident. Without this, you can neither be duly excited nor encouraged to your work; nor hope nor pray for divine success in it, nor bear up aright under the difficulties you must encounter if you attempt to be faithful.”*This book should be high on all ministers and elders book list for along with all the other things necessary to make his argument he also calls the minister and or candidate to reflection/self-examination and a deep dependence on Christ.**

**30.  A LOOK INTO THE LIFE AND LOVE OF SEVERUS SNAPE: An Essay by Amber Vilate (2013). Severus is the topic of many books one of the most recent came out in 2023 simply named SEVERUS SNAPE. All of them seem to have a common theme and that is to help the researcher and then their readers to understand and appreciate Severus or Snivelus! This author specifically wants to look at him as a central character and his desire for love even though his twisted sense of love is what troubles him most. The author writes, *“Severus Snape was deathly in love with Lily Evans. Shock of shocks. After my initial reaction of denial, I realized how much sense it all made. Of course Snape was in love with her. Is there anything besides love that would cause a person like him to go against his own dark nature? What, other than love, could have convinced Dumbledore of the sincerity of such a troubled person? The main theme of the Harry Potter series is love. How better to illustrate that theme than by giving the man we all loved to hate an undying, terrible, and unrequited love that would eventually redeem him from all the evil he had done? I don’t believe he ever thought he was fully forgiven for the hurt he caused, but in sacrificing himself he absolved himself in my eyes. Severus Snape showed me how deep the theme runs in the series.”*Het theses continus a little later on in the essay/booklet, *“Some readers assume that it was Harry’s capacity for love, etc., that brings about Voldemort’s destruction. Sure. If Harry hadn’t been willing (and groomed from a young age) the story would not have happened. But let’s take into account that if Snape hadn’t chosen power over love, Harry would never have had the choices he did. Let’s say Severus married Lily. In the midst of Voldemort’s rule, Severus resists the lure of power and goes with his heart–they live in as much happiness as could be had at that time. There is never a prophecy. No one ever steps up to destroy Voldemort. Voldemort rules the world and a lot of people die. The end. Scary, isn’t it? I won’t say that there was no other way to tell the story of Voldemort’s downfall, but as we know it, without Severus Snape making the choices he made, the story couldn’t exist. He had to go the way of power. He couldn’t have Lily.”* Right from the very beginning, we formed many feelings of dislike towards Severus...especially in his manners. He hated Harry...we wanted Harry to win. As we kept reading each book we finally realized, that Snape was protecting Harry's back. Of course when he took Dumbledore's life that brought back all the feelings of dislike… but at the end, when Harry collected Snape's dreams...we finally understand it all...All the pieces of the puzzle fit nicely...it was all tied up neatly. Severus Snape was NOT a bad guy after all because of his love for Lily as the author of this work concludes. Snape’s lasts words say it all, *his grip on Harry’s robe slackened. ‘Look ….at…me…’ he whispered. And then the narrator says…The green eyes found the black…”*He looked into Lily’s eyes one last time.**

**31.  HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE,by J.K. Rowley (2005).  As Harry moves into his sixth year his power continues to grow…but is it enough? Even in the midst of a war that has spilled over into the non-wizarding world life goes on at Hogwarts where we find Harry struggling with himself…his temper and his feelings for a particular red-headed girl. A Potions book and a new professor are a great distraction for Harry and the gang but the “fun” also comes with great tragedy as the book comes to an end. Lord Voldemort is growing stronger as is Harry’s relationship with Professor Dumbledoreas they seek together to unravel Lord Voldemort’s weaknesses if there are any. Dumbledore’s wisdom even comes forth as Harry and him argue,*“Ah, Harry, how often this happens, even between the best of friends! Each of us believes that what he has to say is much more important than anything the other might have to contribute!” “I don’t think what you’ve got to say is unimportant, sir,” said Harry stiffly. “Well, you are quite right, because it is not,” said Dumbledore briskly.”*The professor also gives Harry great encouragement when he says of Harry*; “You are protected, in short, by your ability to love!” said Dumbledore loudly. “The only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort’s! In spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven, when you stared into a mirror that reflected your heart’s desire, and it showed you only the way to thwart Lord Voldemort, and not immortality or riches."*This relationship reaches its climax when the student must carry the Master, *“I am not worried, Harry,” said Dumbledore, his voice a little stronger despite the freezing water. “I am with you.” Now death has found him from a number of avenues and Harry remains resolutely comforted by Dumbledore’s words to him, "It was important, Dumbledore said, to fight, and fight again, and keep fighting, for only then could evil be kept at bay, though never quite eradicated. . . ."*Harry has come of age… a year early and knows what he must do! Snape a half-blood? Lord Voldemort has been exposed to be a half-blood already. Men of power telling lies about their own heritage to make themselves feel better do evil things…but Severus Snape?!?*“Tobias Snape was a Muggle from what it said in the Prophet.” “Yeah, that fits,” said Harry. “He’d play up the pure-blood side so he could get in with Lucius Malfoy and the rest of them. . . . He’s just like Voldemort. Pure-blood mother, Muggle father . . . ashamed of his parentage, trying to make himself feared using the Dark Arts, gave himself an impressive new name—Lord Voldemort—the Half-Blood Prince—how could Dumbledore have missed—?”*And what is this, treasonous behavior for Draco Malfoy (as if we are at all surprised) and Snape once again stepping in to*“keep him safe*”….but was it for Malfoy or for Dumbledore? This is yet another long book(over 650 pages) but the action is seemingly non-stop for Harry, Ron and Hermione as they seek to discover the coming and goings of the usual culprits Malfoy, Snape and of course, Lord Voldemort. …heading intoThe Deathly Hallows.**

**32.  ON UNION WITH CHRIST AND EFFECTUAL CALLING, by John Brown of Haddington, Monergism (modernized) Copyright © 2023 (1722-1787 a self-taught Scottish minister and author, the Old English version of this work was published in 1804).it has been recently said, *“Eighteenth-century Scotland produced many noted ministers, scholars and educators, but none greater, or so greatly loved, in his own day or afterwards, as John Brown of Haddington”* I have recently read John Brown of Haddington’s book THE GOSPEL MINISTRY: An Address to Ministers and Students of Theology (see review above) which I thought would help set the pace for this book…written in the late 1700’s but formally published almost 30 years after his death. But NO… this latest one by Monergism was “modernized” and not very well.  The grammar was not well done….words and even sentences not finished. (maybe more to do with editing…I hope) Also, doctrinally it would be confusing if someone had not read anything else by him…staunchly Calvinistic and Presbyterian in polity some statements don’t reflect this at all. Many of the translations from Old English to new left the reader wondering if Brown may be just a bit semi-Pelagian… when he clearly was not. (Maybe that was the bent of the translator.) But once you get past these obvious missteps this book gives a rousing and short (the book is less than 200 pages depending upon formatting to your devise) doctrinal discussion on these most important topics for Christians to embrace and understand. *“The overall benefit that Christ, through His humility, achieves and grants in His exaltation, is our redemption or salvation. This encompasses our complete deliverance from the violated law, from sin, Satan, the world, death, and hell. It encompasses our full right to and possession of grace and glory. A legal union between us, as guilty and self-ruined debtors and criminals, and Him as our surety. This union was formed from eternity when we were chosen in Him. The everlasting love of God and the covenant of grace serve as the bonds of this union. The imputation of our sins to Christ's account, so that His satisfaction for them can be imputed to us in legal terms, is the result of this union (Hebrews 7:22; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:19).”*After giving the doctrinal and Scriptural proofs he boosted his argument by launching into giving answers to the Objections Urged Against It in his day and age which, interestingly enough, are the some of the same question that people ask today. *“God's demands for dutiful obedience do not necessarily imply that men have sufficient strength to fulfil them. Instead, they serve to convict them of their inability and drive them to Christ for righteousness and strength. These demands represent what they owe to God, themselves, and their neighbors under the consequence of eternal damnation.”*These books by John Brown of Haddington are extremely helpful to ministers as they reflect on their calling and to the Church as it reflects on its purpose and place in the community. Without proper doctrine there can’t be a true church.**

**33.  TRUTH AND LOVE HAPPILY MARRIED IN THE SAINTS by Thomas Hill-(1648 to the Right Honorable Lord Mayor of London).  This is book reflects a theme of utmost unity from a series of sermons he gave during the English Civil War.)Christian can stand but it must be for the betterment of Christ and His Church. He writes,*“When truth and love are united, they flourish and bear fruit in the Christian life. Truth without love produces empty, dry speculation, which leads to pride and arrogance. Love without truth leads to blind devotion—not unlike the false piety of Roman Catholicism, or the shallow formalism of nominal Protestants. Without unity, believers will never experience intimate communion with Christ. They will never fully benefit from him as members of his body unless they learn this vital lesson—how to promote unity. This leads us to the key propositions that emerge from this final argument, based on necessity, as found in verse 15: "But speaking or following the truth in love, grow up into Christ in all things, who is the head."*He speaks into all areas of the Christian life because every area ought to reflect this Truth and Love which leads to unity almost at any cost.The truth and love which leads to and enables unity to flourish is an essential to the Christian life and the church needs to get high marks in showing, living and professing this. One of the book’s most engaging aspects is Hill’s historical and theological urgency. Preaching in the turbulent era of the English Civil War, he warns against the dangers of allowing disputes over secondary matters to fracture Christian unity. Hill argues that while believers must stand firm on essential doctrines, they must also exercise patience, humility, and brotherly love in areas of disagreement—a message that remains profoundly relevant in today’s church landscape. But this book is also so timely.  Remember again this sermon/book was published in 1648. *“Many cry out for love, love, love, and yet some of these same voices reject the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. At the same time, they condemn the smallest of so-called heterodox opinions while demanding an all-embracing unity. But how can we expect true believers and ungodly men to be united in love? What kind of church would we then have? Yes, we are called to love even the most carnal men—but only with a love of pity, not with a love of delight and approval. Christ does not expect us to love indiscriminately, but rather to love as He loves. So what kind of love should we cultivate? A love that edifies and leads to true reformation. A sincere love for souls, not merely a superficial or flattering love. A love that is rooted in Christ, loving the Head as well as the members.”*Also, his bias towards the Geneva Bible comes shining through as he informs the readers of some problems with their revered King James Version of he Scriptures.  He catalogues many such “errors” of all I choose one, *“During the (KJV) translation of 1 Samuel 8:11, where Samuel warns the Israelites about the abuses of a king, the original translation read: "He will take your sons..." However, the translator was summoned to Lambeth Palace and pressured to change "will take" to "shall take"—a subtle but significant alteration. "Will take" describes what the king will inevitably do—a prophecy of tyranny. "Shall take" makes it sound like a commandment—suggesting that kings have a divine right to rule in such a manner. This change was not made for accuracy, but to serve the interests of monarchical authority. The translator, refusing to violate his conscience, resisted the alteration.”* This book is timely and a much needed help as it displays both doctrinal devotion and Christ-like charity as we live in a time (on-line especially) where the Church seems to delight in eating its own on the public stage….thus forgetting the command to love one another as Christ loved us for the sake of being right. An excellent read.**

**34.  LET’S STUDY MARK, Sinclair Ferguson (Banner of Truth Trust publishing1999) I finally got around to reading this in preparation for the Mark series.  I have had this book for a long time.  The first time I went through it as a devotional and it is good that way. When I began reading it again at the end of laast year I realized that he had some good points that I thought at the time I would want to integrate into a sermon series. But as I progressed  through to the end I was more convinced that this book is best used for personal study and devotion. So I am placing it on here now having finished it once again to recommend it for that purpose. Ferguson is perhaps the theologian of our age that I really admire (it doesn’t hurt that he is Scottish…so easy to listen to…but I don’t listen to much.) Any way His books are amazing. I used quite a lot of His book LESSONS FROM THE UPPER ROOM that dealt with Jesus’ last night on earth when I was teaching through the Gospel of John, but this one is different. I am glad to have read it a second time and it has been of personal devotional help for me in these days...so to that end I recommend it.**

**35.  HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS, by J.K. Rowling (2007). The war looms on. Hogwarts will be attacked and almost destroyed…but enough of the spoilers. There will be friends and foes who perish along the way but the climax and the end of this one brings you to a crescendo and closure. The heart of Book 7 is a hero's mission--not just in Harry's quest for the Horcruxes or is it Hallows, but in his journey from boy to man. Here Harry faces more dangers than are found in all six books combined, from the direct threat of the Death Eaters and Lord Voldemort, to the subtle perils of losing faith in himself. It seems as this book sums up this whole story line that readers would do well to remember Dumbledore's warning about making the choice between *"what is right and what is easy,"* and know that Rowling applies the same difficult principle to the conclusion of her series. She takes us on a journey in this book between the dark and dangerous honor and dishonor contempt and reconciliation, love and loss and right and wrong.  It is in this book that you will find the answers to hotly speculated questions about Dumbledore, Snape, and Lord Voldemort, but Rowling's skill as a storyteller is revealed in that even the most astute and careful reader will be taken by surprise even after multiple readings. There is an interesting exchange of note between the main characters that really got me thinking, *“’But even if we wreck the thing it lives in,” said Ron, “why can’t the bit of soul in it just go and live in something else?’ ‘Because a Horcrux is the complete opposite of a human being’, says Hermione. Seeing that Harry and Ron looked thoroughly confused, Hermione hurried on, ‘Look, if I picked up a sword right now, Ron, and ran you through with it, I wouldn’t damage your soul at all.’  ‘Which would be a real comfort to me, I’m sure,’ said Ron. Harry laughed. ‘It should be, actually! But my point is that whatever happens to your body, your soul will survive, untouched,’ said Hermione. ‘But it’s the other way round with a Horcrux. The fragment of soul inside it depends on its container, its enchanted body, for survival. It can’t exist without it.’”*I am always interested by how fiction, as in this case, mirrors the truth….for our body may die but our soul lives on. This book has been, as all the books, a fun read and enlightening as well…the themes that work best have always been creation, fall and restoration and they are evident throughout these books and especially this one.  Another long book (almost 800 pages) but a page turner to be sure. I am glad for a good month of reading, again. Such a classic story. One that I will visit time and again just like this time…but I don’t remember if this is the second or third time...it is so fresh each time. I almost hate it that this that this reading cycle is over…oh well.**

**36.  I STARSHIP: The Earth We Knew, by Scott Bartlett  (Published Dec. 2024).  An amazing thing has happened; Sergeant Henry Morgan has lived more time AS A Starship then he lived as a human or for that matter longer than he was DEAD. As a Reconstituted Mind (RM-for short) he has traveled the galaxy and fought more battles and now has returned to an Earth that is totally foreign to them.  In fact, by the time this book is finished Henry would have been THE ship for over 350 years. The same crew have been with him during this time because of the technology called Offset they are able to be in a cryogenic state while decades go by never aging, but never seeing the people they left behind…long dead. But this is what they signed up for to a point. But as I said they have finally made it back to earth because the Scree have been attacking and taking over. It took 100 years for their return and the earth is still under attack…(nobody human or alien has warp technology in these books, though the Fundament has what is called a slip stream but it doesn’t go everywhere and still requires years in space.) Anyway, they have returned to earth to help secure a future for mankind only to be hit with the fact that a powerful AI is running things and keeping the people from thinking for themselves. (Spoiler Alert: turns out it is some malcontent Earthers that left years ago and see themselves as the saviors of the human race though they are simply controlling this part of the population.) They fight battles, they win skirmished in the nick of time, they make fun of each other and Henry continues to evolve figuring out who he actually is at this point. How can a computer program (sophisticated one to be sure) be having a metaphysical crisis? Does henry have a soul? Since he died but now has been brought back where did his soul go …heaven, hell, oblivion…even though he still “feels” alive? This one is the best of the 3 so far (one more coming out in December) there is still too many things going on that do not conclude well. And then there is Henry after 350 years, most of the time on his own as the crew is in Offset, I would have thought we would “know” more about henry and he would have been better at being a RM by now.**

**37.  THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN, by Francis Schaeffer (first published,1970, this book, 6th printing,1974). In my opinion, there should be a wide reading of Schaeffer’s book again in this 21st Century. Many of his books focus on the simple realities of our Christian faith that we have walked away from or rejected out of hand. This little book bolding professes that the Mark of the Christian is love…the way Christ loved, NOT the way the world wants to love and doesn’t! he posits that we all too often find it easier to separate ourselves…them and us….believers and non-believers…those who have assaulted our character and our friends…our church against the church down the road. He clearly states with John 13:34-35-*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*, that we choose to forget or we have forgotten to love as Jesus did …as the Bible commands. Of course, this is said in the greater context of Jesus’ greatest commands, *“Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*  Then he goes on throughout this book to draw out the truth in these that we too often want to forget. Which answers his opening statement, *“Christians have not always presented a pretty picture to the world. Too often  they have failed to show the beauty of love, the beauty of Christ, the holiness of Christ and the world has turned away.”*He goes on in making his point. “*All men are our neighbors, and we are to love them as ourselves. We are to do this on the basis of creation, even if they are not redeemed, for all men have value because they are made in the image of God…There are two humanities. That is true. Some men made in the image of God, still stand in rebellion against Him; some, by the grace of God, have cast themselves upon God’s solution. Nonetheless, there is in another very important sense only one humanity.  All men derive from one origin. By creation all men bear the image of God.”*See how he thinks and expresses the very truths of the Bible in a way that causes us to stop and think…Is this really what I believe? And any true Christian would stop long enough to at least ask this. He finishes this work with these words that we must take to heart 50+ years later, *“Love …and the unity it attests to(John 13:34-35)…is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christian are indeed Christians and that Jesus was sent by the Father.”***