**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.**