**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.”***