**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,**by 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**, bySinclair 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.”*

**38.  QUIDDITCH THROUGH THE AGES: A Harry Potter Hogwarts Library Book**by J.K. Rowling, Kennilworthy Whisp (2001 AND 2014 digitally). This is written from a first person perspective. As a sports historian, Kennilworthy Whisp writes with great energy and excitement as he reveals the beginnings and spread of this favorite sport among warlocks and witches in the Harry Potter world that Muggles rarely see. Though as he reminds we have seen enough that we associate brooms with witches. As he says, *“We owe our knowledge of the rude beginnings of Quidditch to the writings of the witch Gertie Keddle, who lived on the edge of Queerditch Marsh in the eleventh century. Fortunately for us, she kept a diary, now in the Museum of Quidditch in London.”*He then takes from the 11th Century through the history of related sports and I found myself understanding the Scots a bit more for they had a game which was a forerunner to Quidditch where they levitated boulders and then each got a cauldron and then the boulders fell for them to catch as many as possible.  The one problem is that 70% or so of the player would be killed… a thoroughly Scottish sport…for they like doing things with rocks! Also the Scots used a boulder as a Bludger in the early days…took a while to move to a real Bludger so they could actually play other teams! Quidditch has truly become a worldwide sport with the only place not overly involved being the East because they still prefer carpets to brooms. Even in America where it was slow to catch on, *“Quidditch is gaining popularity in the United States. Two teams have recently broken through at international level: the Sweetwater All-Stars from Texas, who gained a well-deserved win over the Quiberon Quafflepunchers in 1993 after a thrilling five-day match; and the Fitchburg Finches from Massachusetts, who have now won the US League seven times and whose Seeker, Maximus Brankovitch III, has captained America at the last two World Cups.”*All in all…like all the other books from this series they have been fun and informative in sharing the world of wizards with us Muggles.

**39.  THE GOOD OLD WAY: God's Way, to Soul-Refreshing Rest: A Sermon Preached to the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen of the City of London, at Their Anniversary Meeting on Wednesday in Easter Week at Christ Church,** By Thomas Hill, B.D., Pastor of Titchmarsh in Northamptonshire (April 24, 1644, Being the Day of the Monthly Public Fast. Published that same year after it was expanded to over 130 pages) (MONERGISM BOOKS Copyright © 2025) His main text (but like all ministers at that time, he basically uses the WHOLE bible in his sermon.), was Jeremiah 6:16-19 –*“Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ (So) I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘We will not pay attention.’ Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.”* he exposits this passage to the very accent mark in the Hebrew and the very smallest detail of the Greek to point out to the Lord Mayor how far the Church and the City of London has fallen away from the Good Old Way. But it is not about accusation so much as pointing out the problem and then offering solutions …biblical solutions to get the churches reengaged with the Word of God and what he as the leading magistrate might do to help this along. He is giving the sermon at the beginning of the Westminster Assembly, *“We in England are now engaged in councils of reformation, seeking to move further from Babylon and nearer to Jerusalem. By the good hand of God upon us, we are under His own ordinance—an assembly of ministers has been called to discover the true way of Scripture. Such a great task requires great prayer. It is well worth our importunity in fasting and prayer that, having arrived at this great turning point, amidst such a grand change in the Church of England, we may clearly find the good old way. The Battle for Truth We must expect that Satan—who stood at Joshua's right hand to resist him when he was engaged in temple work (Zechariah 3:1)—will now use all his methods to hinder and mislead us. He will seek to: Confuse us with difficulties Entangle us in error Divide us with a multitude of opinions.”*And, of course Westminster was wroth with in-fighting, sickness and even deaths of its divine commissioners…the devil did much to fulfill the prophecy of Hill. According to Scripture and Rev. Hill the Good Old Way is clear if only the Church would take heed, *“The very tenor of the covenant is this: God’s people shall be a repenting people, a believing people, an obeying people. And here is true Christianity: to have mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. To be merciful without boasting of it, to be kind without pride, to endure ingratitude with meekness, and to suffer injury with long-suffering.”*All through this wonderful sermon/treatise we are encouraged to take the way laid out for us by God…and not be impertinent as His people were who clearly rejected his word and then in keeping with the covenant He rejects them. May the Church beware and heed to call to the right way!

**40.  REFRESHMENT OF THE SOUL: A Year of Daily Devotional Reading from the “Heavenly Doctor” Richard Sibbes,**compiled and edited by David B. MacKinnon 2022. Richard Sibbes is probably my favorite “Puritan” pastors for his ease of understanding and his lack of compromise on the Scriptures for the good of the Church. Rev. MacKinnon has used the Puritans for devotion and for encouragement and for conviction for over 40 years and upon retiring he decided to take many of the pieces of Sibbes theology from all his books and place them into a 366 day devotional for the Church. If you have never broke into the Puritan library and gleaned from their vast wealth of knowledge and encouragement in the scriptures this would be a great place to being with the man that many in his day called the “heavenly doctor” for his fullness of faith and Spirit that came through to everyone he encountered.  I use the word encouragement but a better word often used concerning Sibbes writings and his sermons was the word refreshment...spiritual refreshment for the soul.  And that is the desire of the compiler and editor of these daily devotionals …that they would be a spiritual refreshment to God’s people throughout the year. And I place this here as I use it over and over again, (using it right now) with the desire that others would look into the Puritans and especially Sibbes as the “heavenly doctor”…bringing refreshment from God’s word and exposition to the souls of God’s people.

***41.*HARD SAYINGS: Understanding Difficult Passages of Scripture,**by R.C. Sproul, 2023. This book has been compiled by R.C.’s publisher based on teachings that he has given on this subject through the years.  This work was published post-humorously in 2023 as R.C. was called Home in 2017 but it IS his teachings. Hard sayings of the Bible are important for they stretch our faith. They don’t necessarily challenge the core doctrines that we know and love but they certainly stretch our faith sometimes as we scratch our heads with the question, *How does that work*? RC says there are 3 types of hard sayings. “*First, Scripture may be a hard saying if it appears to us to be harsh. It is hard for us to swallow because such statements can be a jolt like when God orders the Israelites to institute herem…the wholesale destruction of the Canaanite nation…every man, women and child! Second, is in one that is just plain hard to understand such as the Trinity or God’s sovereignty along wiith human responsibility or God’s election before the foundation of the world. The third type of hard saying is the one that has become controversial in the history of biblical interpretation, usually because of one of the first two reasons.”* The publisher has put together 27 on the hard sayings that RC preached and taught on; like: Creation Days, The Sons of God , The hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart, Rahab’s lie, The Unpardonable Sin, Why didn’t Jesus know the time and place of His own return, vessels prepared for destruction, the man of lawlessness, did Jesus descend into hell, and the end time to name just a few. This is the kind of book you can always pick up for some quick guidance on these and many other subjects that are hard for us and others to understand. As usual, an informative read, but also a devotional read because RC shows us God’s character and He shows us God’s grace, and he shows us God helping us to realize that he is and we are not.  For He will reveal to us the things we need and He won’t reveal the rest.

**42.  EXOPLORING THE LORE OF MIDDLE-EARTH: A Practical Guide to The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, and Beyond**by JRR Jokien (2024) This is an interesting little book written by someone who seems to know his way around the “world” of Tolkien’s most beloved works. I appreciate this guide even though I have read everything he talks about as far as the main. But He speaks so clearly about how he wants to help others to read these amazing works. *“When faced with a task that is seemingly beyond us, sometimes what is needed is a guide. We need someone who can decipher the map’s secrets because they have already been where we wish to go. That’s why I’ve put together this guide. If you’ve ever wanted to take your first steps into the wider world of*The Lord of the Rings*or go deeper into the history and lore of Middle-earth, this guide is for you.”*And it is. It is short and concise in how it seeks to help the novice to traverse the Tolkien world of middle-earth and ought to be the first thing recommended to adults who are seeking to pick up these classics books. It is also a helpful guide o parents who are engaging their children in these works as well. The other thing Ii like about this is that it is up to date with the latest releases of expanded materials from the Silmarillion, namely, The Fall of Gondolin, The Children of Hurin, The Tale of Beren and Luthien and just 2 years ago The Fall of Numenor. He also speaks of the Unfinished Tales of Numenor and Middle-earth but quite frankly there are only a small group of things to be mined from this work now that the stand alone works have come out. I have read Tolkien’s “article “on Fairy-stories” which basically has him describing the difference between myth and fantasy (I think him and Lewis worked on this together since Lewis had a whole lecture series on this topic) along with other works, like his work on King Arthur (another of Tolkien’s passions) but I just received Letter from Father Christmas this last Christmas so I am looking forward to expanding my Tolkien reading with that as well. One surprise is that there was no reference to The Adventures of Tom Bombadil. All in all a good guide to help people get started and journey through these works of great worth.

**43.  THE POWER OF THE WORD: How God Uses Preaching to Bring Faith and Conversion,** by Samuel Rutherford (1600 – 29 March 1661) was a Scottish Presbyterian pastor and theologian and one of the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly)(1st published 1648, Monergism 2025). This is a powerful book talking about the instrumentality of the preaching of the Word as God uses it to bring forth His elect in every nation. But it is also a resounding critique of some of the movements of the day the spring from Antinomianism, like Enthusiastists, and Swenckfeldians. These movements all revolve the mystic concerns that place internal emotional responses over the external. These Antinomians of the day claim that believers no longer need the Word, Law or Sacraments which was then and is now a damning error especially when one calls themselves Reformed and a Christian. *“The externally preached Gospel, according to Del and the Antinomians, is not the Word by which Christ converts souls. Faith, they argue, does not come from outward hearing as an instrument of conversion—contrary to what we have already proven. Instead, they claim that faith comes from the inward Word in the heart, which they define as faith itself. The Antinomian and Enthusiast Distortion of the Gospel, together with Swenckfeld, claim that the Gospel should only be preached to those who already have the internal Word and Spirit in their hearts.”* True faith as Rutherford tells us, *“…clings to these as a husband is to cling to his wife. These are not idle and powerless sounds of an age gone by, as they say, but are actually living, active instruments of God which bring power to God’s people, sanctifying us in the Spirit to bring life and holiness, in Christ, to His people.”*While constantly speaking of the import of the spoken Word and the means of grace he spends a lot of time refuting these Antinomian beliefs that were sweeping through the church back in the day. *“It is true that the Word is the instrument insofar as the Spirit works in us the same habit of new life, and the same Spirit of grace and supplication that is promised in the Word (Isaiah 44:3-4; Zechariah 12:10; Ezekiel 36:26-27). It is the same Spirit that Scripture says Christ, by His merits, has purchased (John 1:16-18; John 12:32; Revelation 1:5; Hebrews 10:19-22).”*An excellent book on the  topic but also an excellent example of how to dispute error…a dying exercise in the church. Many would rather destroy that seek to persuade with actual truth.

**44.  THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CALVINISM:**by Albert Martin (pastor for 46 years at Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, New Jersey), Copyright © 2016. This guy is one of the staunchest 5 point Calvinists for a Baptist that I have read. He would even give Paul Washer a run for his money. He clearly and capably puts down 3 pointers and 4 point Calvinists, as not even a “thing”.  He goes so far as to define true Christians as 5 pointers. In fact, he has an interesting definition that he uses throughout the book for a Calvinist. *“I say by way of application, do not talk about being a Calvinist simply because your itch for logical consistency has been relieved by Calvinism's theological system. Have you seen God? Have you been brought near to Him? That is the issue. I remind you of the words of B. B. Warfield: ‘A Calvinist is a man who has seen God and this sight pervades all our life and all our experience. It lies in a profound apprehension of God in His majesty. The Calvinist is the man who has seen God, and who, having seen God in His glory, is filled with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God’s sight as a creature ' The expression, a proud Calvinist, is a misnomer.”*And again, *“Has God made you a Calvinist? I am not asking whether you have read a book by Boettner, or Kuyper or Warfield and become a Calvinist. I am asking, Has God given you a vision of Himself? Did He shatter you? and bring you to that place by his grace of humility, submission, contrition, gratitude, confidence and joy? That is what makes a Calvinist.”*He echoes much of what Jonathan Edwards said a couple of centuries ago, in his sermon turned treatise, The Pure in Heart Blessed, *“The discoveries which the saints have in this world of the glory and love of God are often in Scripture called the sight of God. Thus it is said of Abraham, that he saw him who is invisible. (Heb. 11:27)To see God, as in the text, implies the sight of him as glorious and as gracious, a vision of the light of his countenance, both as it is understood of the effulgence of his glory, and the manifestations of his favor and love.”* Now he is definitely strong for his position much like Spurgeon was, to him Christianity and Calvinism go hand in hand! But there are a couple of flaws that I would point out. First, everything seems to be dependent on an Isiah like experience with God for us to KNOW if we are a Calvinist aka true Christian. And that brings me to the second point, his lack of covenantal understanding does not allow for him to think that one could grow up from infancy with a heart that simply always loves Jesus and knows that Jesus loves us. He is a die in the wool Baptist and I commend him for taking a bold stand in defining a true Christian but, in my opinion, too much is based on our experience rather than our fruit of faith and our perseverance in the faith. The Practical Implications of Calvinism is much more than an appeal for Calvinism; in effect it is an impassioned plea for authentic Christianity. I end with a review by James White that ii enjoyed, *“'A lot of folks need to read The Practical Implications of Calvinism. Anyone who is going to call themselves a Calvinist, in any discussion, on any of the many online forums, should have to read [this] booklet three times through each year to be able to maintain their Calvinist card, to comment online. I think that would probably remove 75% of the unnecessary, unmitigated offense that Calvinists tend to communicate.”*--James White

**45.  REALITY BREAK (Galaxy Bridge Book 7),**by Daniel Gibbs (2025). This book maintains the height of intensity that the others held throughout this series so far. There are some major players that do not return namely Col. Dermit who had headed up the Marine contingent, but he opted for a quieter part of service after all the years of battle. No energy is lost on this book with a new (old) enemy crashing on to the scene with updated weaponry…enough to more than challenge the Coalition Defense most formidable weapon Gen. David Cohen and the *CSV Lion of Judah*. The Mifreen want to place every sentient being into the NetSim a world of mind control for the greater good they say and yet each one in the Net is under the direct control of the leadership whim of the Mifreen who aren’t in the Net. It will take the Coalition wide forces some of which are reluctant to get involved to overcome this latest foe and overcome they must or the Mifreen will find a way to span both galaxies thus threatening the wellbeing of all.  As always the Mifreen have weaknesses… it is about finding them in time. The biggest weakness of most conquerors is their arrogance and pride that they WILL win and the Mifreen have these in spades. They are at this moment attacking the Joint Base Sagittarius Arch station and all looks dire because the *CSV Lion of Judah* has another mission to fulfill first. Col Larra has a message fr his people as they wait, *“Mateo looked around at his officers—their grimy, determined faces and their dingy uniforms. “Remember, we fight for our freedom, and we will resist any attempt to enslave our minds or bodies. Stand firm. And pray.” (*Just like all of Daniel Gibbs books faith plays a big part in the lives of his character.) Will the mission be fulfilled in time to be able to get back to save the Arch and Gen. Cohen’s family? The next book will tell…REALTY CLASH…moving forward at FTL on this one.

**46.  FAITH IN THE FIVE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES: Strongly Fortified against the Diabolical, Atheistical, Blasphemous Assaults of these Times. Serving for the conviction of Opposers, the satisfaction of Doubters, and the Confirmation of Believers. In a Conference between a godly Independent Minister and a godly Presbyterian Minister with a doubting Christian,**by Edward Fisher (1650, by monergism digitalized 2024) You gotta love this title. No one would do this today because the title is too long. This is one of the first questions and answer books produced for wide dissemination in the church. In this case we have an Independent Minister and Presbyterian Minister and a doubting Christian doing the “speaking”. Independent Minister in the day meant “not Presbyterian in polity”. Independents were often staunch Calvinists (Particular Baptists) sometime even covenantal/Reformed, but they adhered to two main concepts that the Presbyterians did not; namely, local congregational control without any wider geographical spiritual accountability and they rejected any state role in the religious practice of the church. (They would later become Congregationalists. Any way the Independent and Presbyterian are speaking of doctrines other than the doctrine of the church and they do agree on these 5 Fundamental principles and their desire to re-convince this young believer that has been led astray…by faulty teaching that was creeping into the church of the day. The Five Fundamental Principles they deal with are:  (1) There is a God, (2) The Scriptures are true and infallibly the Word of God, (3) the Son and the Spirit are truly God, (4) The soul of man is immortal, and (5) The resurrection of the Body. The proof from Scripture and nature is amazing and short…almost as if it was an actual conversation with an understanding the verbosity stifles discussion. An excellent resource for “proving” these 5 fundamental principles of our faith.

**47*.*THE PURE IN HEART BLESSED,**by Jonathan Edwards (1ST Published 1753, digitalized by monergism 2025) His obvious main text in this sermon that has been expanded into a treatise is, *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."* -- Matthew 5:8. Seeing God for the Christian is an essential principle but not seeing Him with our physical eye for that is forbidden…but with the eye of faith. This is perhaps one of the easiest sermon/treatises that I have ever read by Edwards. He like Owen often get so caught up in minutia that it is hard to keep up…but not with this one for he so clearly proves the point of his title without any having to seek  a definition. He writes, *“To see God, as in the text, implies the sight of him as glorious and as gracious, a vision of the light of his countenance, both as it is understood of the effulgence of his glory, and the manifestations of his favor and love.* *The discoveries which the saints have in this world of the glory and love of God are often in Scripture called the sight of God. Thus it is said of Abraham, that he saw him who is invisible. (Heb. 11:27)”*He is clear throughout that God is the giver of this pure heart but it is our responsibility to continue to attain its experience in this life. *“God is the giver of the pure heart, and he gives it for this very end, that it may be prepared for the blessedness of seeing him. Thus we are taught in the Scriptures. The people of God are sanctified, and their hearts are made pure, that they may be prepared for glory, as vessels are prepared by the potter for the use he designs. They are elected from all eternity to eternal life, and have purity of heart given them, on purpose to fit them for that to which they are chose. Rom 9:23, ‘And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared to glory.’ Hence we learn how great a thing it is to be an upright and sincere Christian. For all such are pure in heart, and stand entitled to the blessedness of seeing the most high God. The time is coming when they shall assuredly see him. They shall see him who is infinitely greater than all the kings of the earth. They shall see him face to face, shall see as much of his glory and beauty as the eyes of their souls are capable of beholding.”*Our responsibility is first of all seen in the type of questions we ask ourselves, such as; Have we ever experienced a change of heart?  Is our faith of the heart, or does it consist in what is moral and formal? Do we regularly understand the vileness of our sin and our need to seek repentance and renewal?  This work is one that needs to be read especially by the many who are struggling with their assurance of faith and what it means to be pure in heart.

**48.  GENESIS,**by Steve Hays (2013-2020). This book is the culmination of all his blog cast put together. Steve Hays was known as an interesting thinker and apologist. His frequent additions to the blog Triablogue was his calling care to the world of academia. He takes the text head on and ends up producing a supremely academic work that has taken me 2 years to walk through.  His approach iis not terribly hard to understand but like his apologetics knowing him and his work enables you to follow him better and I only read an article or two from the blog. So that is to say, it was slow going and extremely thought provoking.  His section of creation has him taking word for word the first 2 chapters and making a case for a biblical creation that would be hard to refute even if you had more degrees behind your name. You must want to have to work your way through this book for it to have any impact. Those who knew Steve (went to be with the Lord in 2020) say all of his writing is engaging (and I have to agree if you have the time to wrestle with it), deeply informed, and unapologetically Reformed but as I said this is not for the faint-hearted. Its 770 pages is one page after the next of helpful and verifiable statistics and biblical knowledge. This would be a good book to have on your shelf as a contemporary reference work. I downloaded it for free 2 years ago from Monergism but to use it properly I would have to purchase the book…and that is probably not going to happen.

**49.  CORPORAL (Conscript Book 4),** by Scott Bartlett (March 2025) Po is coming to age. He has learned and is learning a lot about warfare and life in general by serving so long in the Marines of the GAE. But…he is still learning about himself. In this chapter they have just concluded their work on Nibiru and his raptor team is closer than ever. As they leave they are sent to protect the cloud cities of Venus from an unknown force. Po was on his own, but no longer, he and his guys along with Gunnery Emery seem to be an unstoppable force at least that is what the higher ups think since they have been so successful.  So successful that they even offered him to become an officer which he quickly turned down knowing all that he would lose. Now on Venus…where they “other half” live they keep running into bots that keep malfunctioning and attacking the people…so off they go onto another mission to find out who or what is behind this. Venus’ cities are lost and they still don’t know who is behind this. Bots by the thousands are wreaking havoc…*“Venus’ largest city had just gone down. The system’s most affluent planet had lost its crown jewel. It was a difficult thing to process, and Po was sure he wouldn’t process it for a long time. Not entirely. Not properly. But even so, it occurred to him to wonder what else would go down, now that Aeolia had fallen. And he wasn’t just thinking about Venus’ other cloud colonies. He was thinking of the entire system, and of the species that had always called it home. The species to which he happened to belong.”*Humans were definitely under attack from every direction. But they get a clue and find themselves on yet another mission that may mean the end for the Marines, for Po and his raptor team and life as he knows it. But then he meets a priest… Stay tunes to the next book RAIDER. Scott Bartlett is an extraordinary writer when it comes to military sci-fi and it is always fun to read his stuff.

**50.  DEFENDING SIN:A Response to the Challenges of Evolution and the Natural Sciences**, by Hans Madueme (Professor of theological studies at Covenant College) 2024. This is another academic book that has taken me over a year to finish. When Ii say academic…well./.that is an understatement. Much like Steve hays book GENESIS the author takes on the arguments of the day surrounding evolution and the natural sciences to show how unreliable they are and just how trustworthy Scripture is. That statement sounds like a very pastoral thesis for this book. And while it is a good synopsis of the theme given the books academic nature it is anything but pastoral. Think Sheldon Cooper writing a paper on ‘string-theory” (if you are a fan of the TV show the Big Bang Theory). Everyone that he iis writing to…his audience will immediately “get” his argument and refutations because they are from the same world…but this is not a book for the rest of us. It has taken me over a year just to keep up with his thought. But having  said that what the “rest of us” can appreciate in this work is that he never wavers in his position that the Bible is the supreme authority on all things. And while I may not have always understood his argument it was refreshing to read someone so academically minded but in no way compromising the Bible for the sake of a “paper” or a “book” deal on such a relevant subject that touches every aspect of our lives whether we wish to admit it.  Our doctrine of sin and the fall are paramount in defining everything else in this life. Our doctrine of God as presented in the Bible enables us to see clearly the world around us…but it is our doctrine of Scripture that undergirds everything. For if the Bible ISN’T true we might as well speculate in the natural sciences.

***51.*RETRIBUTION:  Starship Jericho Book 4**,  by Toby Neighbors (FEB. 2025) The galaxy that the crew of the Starship *Renegade*(formally the *Jericho*) is a particularly savage one. The Imperium has enslaved many of the planets in this galaxy and they are unable to fight back even if they wanted to, so that leads this amazing ship and crew to stand in their way. *“The Renegade and her crew were alone in their fight since the Imperium had long ago restricted weapons to the Ashi military forces. No other species had the means to wage war on the Imperium. But Darius was certain that others would join the humans in their struggle against the Ashi, and with every volunteer who was willing to risk their lives in the fight, the Renegade became stronger.”* The point of this conflict for Captain Darius is to keep the Imperium out of the Sol galaxy for thee is nothing back home that could oppose the Imperium save for the Renegade…and they are just one ship. There is much to like in this series (as I just pointed to the basic story line of this book) but there is also a lot of slow periods where not much is gained.  The charcaters are not as robust as Toby’s usual characters and while Master Sergeant Remmy is a highlight for his confidence and skill this book is not really about the Space Marines but about the on-going “dilemma” concerning this ship and Captain Darius’ long term duty. Can one ship make a difference? Will they find anything that can be of assistance to the cause? Will they ever go home? I will probably read the next book whenever it comes out…just because I have invested so much time in it already…just hope the next one is better.

**52.  SETTING OUR AFFECTIONS UPON GLORY: Nine Sermons on the Gospel and the Church,** by Martyn Lloyd-Jones (2013).  This is an old book by today’s standards…these 9 sermons were preached in 1969 at the Pensacola Theological Institutes during Christmas break and they have been reproduced for us to see clarity in preaching and to see the usefulness and power of the Word itself.  This is also the last time the author and esteemed preacher would be in the Us. There is too much compromise today in our preaching. Martyn Lloyd-Jones will have none of it. The first sermon was a redo from a sermon the author had preached during the Blitz during WWII. His text was II Cor. 4:17-18 and we see the apostle writing out of the midst of great troubles, *“…this is what he is able to say: ‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’ Now I want to consider these two verses with you because I believe that a great need in the Christian church today is for a body of people who can speak as Paul does. I think this is also the supreme need of our world as it is at the present time, full of so much uncertainty and toil and trouble…Let me put it to you like this. I am suggesting that in these two verses we have the acid test of our profession of the Christian faith. When I say acid test, I mean the most delicate, the most sensitive test, the test of tests. Let us imagine that I put the following question to you: What is the acid test of any man or woman’s profession of the Christian faith? I can imagine someone without any hesitation saying, “That’s perfectly simple. No problem there. My acid test is the test of orthodoxy. ? I think we must agree at once that the test of orthodoxy is not only a valuable test, it is vitally important. And yet while I say that, I am not prepared to accept the test of orthodoxy as the acid test of one’s Christian profession for this reason: as we know from history, perhaps some of us from personal experience, it is quite possible to be perfectly orthodox and yet to be spiritually dead.* *Paul is surrounded by many troubles and trials and problems. They could not have been worse. Yet he looks at them all and says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Do we react like that as we look at the worst, as we look at life at its darkest and its starkest? I suggest that this is the acid test because, you see, it covers my orthodoxy. The only people who can speak like this are those who know whom they have believed, those who are certain of their faith. Nobody else can.”*  This is a rather long section from the first sermon too show the wisdom, the simply deduction from Scripture, the pastor’s heart and his unwillingness to compromise to the thinking of the day. It is these that are captured in the other 8 sermons which I would recommend to any reader of sermons by such an esteemed preacher whose heart is the heart of a shepherd.

***53.*BATTLESTATIONS: (The Iron Fleet Book 1),** by Daniel Gibbs (2025). It is so good to be back with so many familiar “faces”. These books are set back in the Sagittarius Belt after the Mifreen uprising in the Sexton-B galaxy (which I am still reading…books still coming out and the outcome has not been decided…except now I know for sure of the outcome.) Gen. David Cohen has been promoted to General overall and is riding a desk much like his friend and mentor did when he was coming up through the ranks…but he is serving a President more aligned with League principles a or maybe peace at all cost belief and this is making his job impossible. Well, a new enemy has risen (of course) and is attacking the Outer Rim worlds, in fact, they have all but decimated the CDF fleet that was there to protect these worlds. This new group is not technically the League…but they are old Leaguers and the worst of the worst and they have come with upgrade that rival the CDF in ships. One of the few ships left after the attack was the *Margaret Thatcher* on which the XO is one Lt. Col. Arthur Hanson who had been the head engineer on the *Lion of Judah* for years but prompted because of his leadership abilities beyond wrench pulling. In the battle the Col. Of the boat is killed leaving Arthur to lead and make ways to get back at these monsters. From both Gen. Cohen and his last commanding officer he had learned not to let emotion get in the way of command decisions but that is the problem with this latest enemy…they don’t even attempt to play by anyone rules…they are worse than pirates. A conversation with a rescued hostage gets everything going*…“’When you find these terrorists, I want you to kill them. All of them.’ Arthur pursed his lips. ‘We will.’ Aleinikov grabbed Arthur’s hand and squeezed tightly. ‘Promise me, Colonel. No half measures.’ He put his other hand on hers. ‘No half measures. They’ll get what’s coming to them. As a Marine friend of mine used to say, it’s not our place to judge the terrorists. That’s God’s job. Our job is to arrange a face-to-face meeting with Him as soon as possible. Part of Arthur wondered if he would pay a price in the future for tapping into the rage. He suspected that somewhere, somehow, there would be. But it was a price he was willing to pay if it helped to eradicate the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Orion Spur (PFLOS for short) from the universe.”*Another extremely well written book that keeps you on the edge of your seat. The battle scenes are among the best, and the faith struggles go along with everyday life of soldiers and regular people in the face of evil.

**54.  THE EARL AND THE PHARAOH: From the Real Downton Abbey to the Discovery of Tutankhamun**by The Countess of Carnarvon (Copyright © 2022). This book is for all Downtown Abby fans…well not exactly…for this is about some of the real people who lived there specifically the 5th Earl Carnarvon and his wife Almina. The book begins with showing us “Porchy” from his birth and through the fun filled privileged early years of his life as a “lesser” royal who thought the money grew on trees. Never much of one to stay seated for very long (In today’s world he probably would have been diagnosed with ADHD and given meds that would arrive for decades).  This restless or privilege life led to him not being able to stay in schools that his parents put him in but rather he like to “study” horses and then race cars and then when they became a thing airplanes. He was on the cutting edge of racing with cars when they first arrived on the scene (even being known for the tremendous amount of speeding tickets that he attracted…going 20 miles an hour when the speed limit was 12 or later when engines got bigger …going 50 in a 30 zone.) But it was racing that was a passion and he was good at it whether cars or horses.  His education grew with the years, not in school but in life.  He was the dapper single man of the time until his heart fell for Almina Rothschild. She came from one of the wealthiest families in Europe (maybe the world at the time). This all happened at a good time as the Highclere/ Carnarvon wealth was suffering and Mr. Rothschild knowing of their true love bailed Lord Carnarvon (since his father passed) saving Highclere from ruin. Lord Carnarvon was also plagued with a weak disposition which many speculate later to have been chronic asthma, but with no drugs for this at the time…there were weeks and months where he would be down for the count. But then it would be shooting season or horse racing season or car racing season or time for golf and as a good aristocrat you had to make these events and of course gamble on them as well. But as he grew older (which is a relative term) he also developed a love for all things Egypt especially concerning the antiquities. In the early 1900’s he and Howard Carter began a partnership and friendship in excavation in the Valley of the Kings seeking the treasures of time. Lord Carnarvon being the benefactor and Carter his excavation manager. Prior to WW I both men spent a lot of their time doing the actual work in excavation much to the delight of the workers who look at Lord Carnarvon as a worthy man. After WWI the country of Egypt began to go through growth spurts towards its own independence from Britain and Lord Carnarvon was in the midst of these negotiations as well as continuing his digs. Then in 1922 the find of a century happened…the tomb of PharaohTutankhmun …the “crown jewel” of the excavations since the tomb was discovers mostly intact giving up treasures that were unheard of at the scale before. This is a good read by the Countess if one is interested in the “real” history of Downton Abby/ Highclere Castle. Since we will be seeing Highclere castle up close and personal when we go to England in a couple of weeks, I was wanting to catch up on some of its history so my total influence is NOT the TV show.

**55.  THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL: And Other verses from The Red Book,** by J. R. R. Tolkien (Edited by Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, Illustrated by Pauline Baynes)  published originally in 1962 with the rest being published later in 2001 after his death. (this version was published in 2014 with some revision and commentary with the help of Christopher Tolkien) Now The Red Book is Bilbo’s book of poems and stories of His adventures later to be added to by Frodo after the destruction of the one ring. Most of the poems were actually written between 1924 and the mid1930’s though they underwent many revisions by Tolkien before they were printed. In the title poem we learn a lot about Tom but even more in other poems like the fact that he was only 4 foot tall in his boots…Hobbit size. Except fro his size which I assume most of us think of him as much taller the Lord of the Rings (books) capture well his assurance with life and his infectious happiness all the way around. I had read this poem years ago but not having the commentary that comes at the end of the actual poems and is as long or longer then the texts I was unaware of some of the greater nuances in words and phrases. In reading yet another well-known poems of Tolkien’s THE LAST SHIP and FIRIEL the commentary once again helps with some of the phrases so that we can understand what Tolkien was getting at, *“In Firiel, at the moment of truth ‘her heart misgave and shrank, / and she halted staring’, until the boat has moved on and the elves’ voices are lost in the distance; she is not led into temptation. In contrast, in The Last Ship Fíriel’s feet sink ‘deep in clay’. Reminded of her mortality, she accepts her fate: she ‘cannot’ go with the immortal elves, for although ‘elven-fair’, she was ‘born Earth’s daughter’. In Firiel, she walks back from the water, ‘leaving night / and a vision faded’ in favour of life in a busy household: ‘Brooms, dusters, mats to beat, / pails, and dishes clatter’. But the dénouement is cheerful, with ‘voices loud and merry’ and ‘please, pass the honey!’ The Last Ship ends instead on a note of profound sadness, with Fíriel dressed in ‘russet brown’ (in the earlier version, in green and white), ‘under the house-shadow’, and the sunlight and the elves’ song both ‘faded’.”*Thus we see that these poems catch both her sadness and her happiness in being home…emotions we can all understand from time to time. These poems aren’t for everybody but as we will be going to Oxford on our coming trip I wanted to catch up on all things Tolkien.

**56.  THE MORTIFICATION OF SIN IN BELIEVERS: The Necessity. Nature, and Means of it; with a Resolution of Sundry Cases of Conscience Thereunto Belonging (Abridged and Simplified),**by John Owen (1656- Digitalized after modernized (2025). This note from the editors is important as to why they would take such a work and simplify it for today’s audience. *“This book is for believers who desire to mortify sin and grow in holiness, but who may struggle with the original Puritan prose. It is for those who wish to engage deeply with Owen’s insights without being overwhelmed by dense language or excessive length. It is also for pastors, teachers, and small group leaders looking for a readable and theologically sound resource on sanctification.”*This is what is wonderful about this book. For new readers of the Puritans the reading can be so tedious that they simply put the book down as to hard to read and understand. While Owen does have these allegations lobbed at him from time to time…it may be best to read the original all the way through and then use this one for reference. For the editors at Monergism have painstakingly made this book truly accessible for those who wish to understand and to teach on what Owen thought to be of utmost import. Some of the great features is how the editors break out Owens endless paragraphs into talking points thus making it a “quick” reference. The gems are still here, *“True mortification is a consistent, ongoing battle against sin, not a momentary effort.* *To truly mortify sin, we must: Weaken its power by starving it and cultivating godliness. Engage in constant warfare by studying its tactics and fighting it daily.* *This is not something we can do in our own strength. Mortification must be done by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:13). Without Him, all our efforts will fail. But through Christ, we have the promise of victory. Let us, then, be diligent in this work, knowing that it leads to greater joy, peace, and communion with God.* *The lesson is clear: true mortification requires a heart committed to full obedience to God, not just an intense focus on one troubling sin.* *A natural question arises: How do we know whether we have spoken peace to ourselves or whether the Spirit has truly granted it? Consider these signs: Self-made peace is rushed; God’s peace requires waiting. Those who manufacture peace for themselves are often impatient. They want immediate relief and are unwilling to wait on God. The prophet Isaiah says, “I will wait upon the Lord, who hides His face” (Isaiah 8:17). Those who truly seek peace from God must learn to wait in humility until He speaks.”*When you finish with the original sometimes you are left with mortification being a “one and done” thing…but this book helps us to pull out the true gems that are meant to encourage as Owen intended. This book in whatever form is truly a gem for the church especially in this day so we can actually see the love of the father in enabling us to overcome in this life.

**57.  JACK’S LIFE: The Life Story of C.S. Lewis,**by Douglas Gresham (2005). What a wonderful biography written by his beloved step-son. There have been others biographies written but this one is one of the best. Many biographies are written by people who don’t know the person they are writing about…this one is different and ought to be read by any and all who seek to “know” Lewis better. The author was prompted to write “another” biography on Jack because of what he saw as the motion picture disaster call *Shadowland*that came out in 1994. He said, *“Such a portrayal is troubling simply because it is not true. In fact, anyone who knows the facts knows that it was far from the truth.”*Reading this myself at this time because we are headed to the UK in a couple of weeks and we will be visiting the Kiln and I need to dust up on my Lewis information. He grew up in a home that read books…(of course there was no radio, TV, or internet) so this was quite common is you were wealthy enough to own books…and his parents were just barely wealthy enough for such luxuries. Why is the book entitled “Jack’s Life” because being born Clive Staples Lewis he felt the need to change his name so he changed it to “Jacksie” and then simply Jack as he got older. His mother had been a devout Christian but after her death nothing quite kept that faith going in his father or his brother or himself it wouldn’t be until much later when challenged by some of his closest friends that the Lord would bring Jack back to himself. That story alone is worth the price of the book. He was a great student but not at regular schools they didn’t offer the challenge that he need so he did what unchallenged boys did follow the wrong crowd led by his brother. Another story worth the price of the book is his commitment to a friend of his who died in WWI to care for his mother and sister, MRS. Moore and Maureen, which he did throughout his life with much hardship until he was fully employed at Magdalen College at Oxford.  Life between and during 2 World Wars in England is very enlightening as well. He doesn’t spend a lot of time on the Inklings but if the reader isn’t aware this information will be enlightening as well. Then there is the last 30 pages where he meets Joy and her son, the author, and life is never the same for Jack any more to the time of his death in 1963. Over all this small biography is well worth the time. You do in fact, come away “knowing” C.S. Lewis in ways you never would otherwise.

**58.  CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN IN TEMPTATION: COUNSEL AND CONSOLATION FOR THE TEMPTED,**by Octavius Winslow (1877, monergism somewhat modernized 2024) He fashioned this treatise around these two text…one from Scripture one from his favorite playwright, ***"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin."* Hebrews 4:15.** *"Tis one thing to be tempted, Another thing to fall."--*Shakespeare. He wrote this like Owen in an another generation to remind the church of the great Savior we have that we too often forget. Some of his initial words focus the reader, *“O my soul! Nothing comes between you and God but the atoning blood of Jesus. His blood annihilates all your sin and guilt. Robed in His imputed righteousness, you are to God nearer than the highest angel in heaven--and nearer you can not be--and God draws near to you and speaks—‘A God at hand, says the Lord.’ It is because we have such shallow views of God's love that we have such defective views of God's dealings. We blindly interpret the symbols of His providence, because we so imperfectly read the engravings of His heart. Admirably true to its title. It consists, we presume, of a series of sermons on a theme which can never become obsolete. The author does not deal with the difficulties urged by the Rationalistic critics, but simply regards Our Lord's temptation in the wilderness as identical in all its essential features with the temptations through which we also, as His disciples, must pass. Dr. Winslow is a careful and reverent thinker, and writes with peculiar grace and beauty of expression. He is never weak or commonplace. His words will afford wise counsel and effective consolation to all who read them. We cordially commend this valuable work."* This was high praise of a non-conformist pastor by one settled in the accepted clergy of the day… Church of England. Just like with Owen in the **Mortification of Sin** he highlights our inability to handle temptations without the Spirits interaction and without Jesus’ intersession on our part requiring us to be especially close to the Godhead in all we do so that we can overcome temptation as Christ did.  He is our best example. *“Are you tempted by worldly attraction? distrust of God? creature idolatry? false worship? self-destruction? Oh, bend an ear to Christ’s own words-"My grace is sufficient for you; My strength is made perfect in weakness." Not satisfied with a mere expression of sympathy, Christ imparts skill to fence, power to bear, grace to overcome. "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way that ye may be able to bear it." "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation." Nor let us overlook the exquisite tenderness of Christ’s sympathy. Could language be more expressive of this than that of the Apostle? "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are."*I conclude with a quote by Luther that I never read before that Winslow uses to drive home his point*, “Prayer, temptation, and study," remarked Luther, "are essential to the Gospel minister: equally so to the private Christian. And, since temptation is a test of the reality of our grace, and the genuineness of our faith, and the stability of our hope, let us accept the discipline with meekness and love; and putting on the whole armor of God, withstand the Evil One, and having done all to stand."*Great read especially alongside reading **The Mortification of Sin**. Over one hundred year’s apart and very little difference in overall doctrine.

**59.  THE TRIDENT:** **The Forging and Reforging of a Navy SEAL Leader,**by Jason Redman AND John Bruning, Copyright © 2013. This book actually tells the story of one man…a successful non-commissioned SEAL operator Jason Redman and a commissioned officer who had to comeback from pride and selfishness on the battlefield…AND this same operator’s come back from a near fatal encounter with an insurgent’s machine gun. The book was written in conjunction with John Bruning who has helped other SF operators tell their stories. (**OUTLAW PLATOON** with Sean Parnell and **HOUSE TO HOUSE** with David Bellavia.) This one was written during the long grueling “recovery” of Jason. He is extremely blunt about his pride after coming back into the teams as a commissioned officer trying to make a name for himself. His reflections of what he didn’t know and didn’t care to know show his arrogance which can be a receipt for disaster on the Teams…or life in general. The blindness of becoming a leader of men from being a follower tainted his total outlook on life. One conversation really hit home just before he was sent home in shame was with an operator he considered close who asked him *“Why did you become a SEAL?”* This conversation kept coming back to him until he could actually answer it without only thinking of himself. His reflections often turn to lessons learned, *“Everyone encounters adversity in life. Sometimes it is small, sometimes life changing. How you handle it starts and ends with you. The measure of a person is not found in his or her past, but in how he or she overcomes adversity and builds the future. Outlook will always determine outcome. From here forward, my past would stay in the rearview mirror.* *Only those who lead by example and are willing to give everything for the cause and those under their command will succeed in that environment. A dynamic leader must be humble. A dynamic leader must recognize the sacrifices made by those who choose to follow his decisions. Arrogance has no place there. Real leaders need enough confidence to know when to make decisions and when to listen to those around him who may have more experience. A dynamic leader cannot be selfish. He must set the right tone with his commitment every day.”*I like these books because of the lessons learned for leadership as reminders and strength but also because we see the actual story of true American Warrior hero.

**60.  SAVED: A WAR REPORTER’S MISSION TO MAKE IT HOME,**by Benjamin Hall (2023). Benjamin Hall is a war reporter previously free-lance be has worked for Fox News since 2015.  He is married with 3 girls at the time of this writing. I make this note because of what I will say later concerning his recovery and the contrast with the above recovery of the Navy SEAL Jason Redman. As I stated Benjamin was a war reporter…that is he and his crew were embedded with war fighters, and terrorists…whoever was on the battlefield.  While never serving in the military, as most of the men before him, he has a warriors spirit in his passion for securing the news as accurately and as fair and balanced for all of us to know the reasons for war and for the atrocities of war. He was good at this job…getting the stories that others couldn’t but at the same time like a Special Forces Operator, sacrificing so much time with family and friends. Circling the globe he covered every possible “bad” situation that he could until he met his match in the Ukrainian War in 2022, when the car he was riding in was hit by a Russian bomb. The initial shock of a first bomb in front of them required a quick retreat but before the Ukrainian soldiers could react another bomb hit close enough to wreck the car they were in. Benjamin’s co-work Pierre was thrown from the car and Benjamin was told to get out of the car by Pierre and by a voice of his daughter in his head. He did get out just before another bomb came in to finish the job of the car killing another of his colleagues still in the car and the 2 Ukrainian soldiers.  He didn’t know it at the time but his other colleague and trusted friend was dying and would be dead by the time a Ukrainian Special Forces group swung in a swooped up Benjamin and rush his to hospital. The main part of the book focuses on Benjamin’s rescue from Ukraine by x- special forces guys and Fox News and His recovery. The part I personally struggles with was the fact that for the first 4 months or so of his recovery his girls did not know why daddy wasn’t home and as he lay recovering at Brooks Army hospital in San Antonio his wife and family were at home in London.  This is contrast to Jason Redman who had his wife and children totally involved with each phase of his recovery which in fact benefitted him greatly with the PTSD that came with the head trauma he incurred. For months the girls didn’t know and they weren’t really made aware that he had lost a leg and couldn’t see out of one eye and had no feet to speak of and one arm was basically recovering as.  He didn’t want the “distraction” of his family while he focused on his own recovery which doctors said would take 2 years …a recovery that had him home and recovering in London within 9 months. His story is compelling to be sure…but his decision to keep his girls out of the loop just doesn’t set well with me. I know everyone makes decisions for their families but this one seemed selfish to me. Still I am glad to have read his story.

**61.  LET THE CHILDREN WORSHIP,**by Jason Helopoulos (2016).  This book has been around for a while and I have been wanting to read to it to assess its usefulness for our families. This comes highly recommended by people such as Nancy Guthrie, Carl Trueman and Derek Thomas and appears to be a companion to his other book **A NEGLECTED GRACE: Family Worship in the Christian Home.**(which is in itself a good read for parents seeking how to get one started and to keep it up with different age groups.) In this book he briefly informs parents concerning the purpose of worship, what worship should look like and why Children ought to participate in worship given the fact that they always are seen in worship alongside their parents and other adults throughout the Scriptures. After all our hearts desire is that our children will respond to God’s grace as early as possible I this life. They need to see us interact in worship and hear us sing so that they too will be drawn to these things. He gives a number of reasons why it is so hard to train our children to worship but I will highlight 2. He says from the beginning in one way or another if we are not having family worship at home throughout the week they will not be ready to worship on Sunday with all God’s people. But also, he says like so many others through the years, that our preparation for worship is so crucial, which includes such practical things as laying our outfits the night before, having boring stay at home Saturday evening, going to bed early, as often as possible leads to a lot less stress before and during church. Jesus commands that we bring the children to Him so that he can bless them so keeping them out of the worship service (especially for children’s church or Sunday School or Worship training classes) should not be an option for parents and should not be an option offered by the church. This book ends with testimonials concerning how making these changes to the routine has benefited the families time of worship during the week and in corporate worship.  I love how he answers this question: What is unique about corporate worship? It is corporate…including men, women, boys and girls! Great stuff.

**62.  DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP,** (Modernized), by John Owen (originally written and published in 1647; digitalized version Copyright © 2025). Just after Owen formed a church on the principles of independency from the Church of England, at Coggeshall, in Essex. England, he set down to write these scriptural ‘rules”/principles on the subject of fellowship and discipline. The first part contains 7 principles exhorting the member of their duties toward the pastor and the next 15 on the duties of the members towards one another. He will also tell his readers that these are not exhaustive. He will establish each principle with many examples of his point from scripture then he will give a brief exposition so that church members can grow in piety, sound judgment, diligence in study and a somewhat comprehensive knowledge of Scripture something lacking from their time on the Church of England. This particular book is somewhat different from all Owens other works in that it is purposefully “easy” to follow and understand…and this version modernized is even easier to follow and apply than the first. Here is an example: *“One of the simplest yet most meaningful ways a congregation supports its pastor is by showing up—by gathering faithfully when the church is called together. This includes Sunday worship, prayer meetings, or special assemblies for the teaching of the Word. When believers gather in obedience and unity, they not only receive spiritual nourishment, but also affirm the authority and labor of their pastor.”* And here as well when speaking of how we are to be towards one another, *“Unity is one of the clearest fruits of Christian love, and one of the most emphasized duties in all of Scripture. It’s pressed upon us repeatedly with heartfelt urgency by Christ and His apostles. There are three kinds of unity that every believer should care about: 1) Spiritual Unity- This is our shared life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. All who believe—whether on earth or already in heaven—are united to the same Savior and indwelt by the same Spirit. This unity is unbreakable and eternal. 2) Church Unity (Ecclesiastical Unity)- This is our unity as a local body in how we worship, receive the Word, and live together under the gospel. 3) Practical or Civil Unity This includes living peaceably together in everyday life. Believers should not be fighting over worldly matters. If we are going to reign with Christ and judge the world one day, how can we quarrel with one another over temporary things? We are called to lovingly watch over one another’s lives, to gently correct a fellow believer who is straying from God’s ways, and, if they will not listen, to bring the matter to the church for their restoration.”*This book has been reprinted dozens of times through the years because of its extremely practical nature to help people know what true Christian Fellowship looks like.  I commend its free reading from Monergism.

**63.  GOSPEL GROUNDS AND EVIDENCES OF FAITH OF GOD’S ELECT,** by John Owen (originally written in 1675 from **THE WORKS OF JOHN OWEN** edited by WILLIAM H. GOOLD VOLUME 5 This Edition of **THE WORKS OF JOHN OWEN** first published by Johnstone & Hunter, 1850-53 Source text: Ages Software, 2000. Modernized, corrected, annotated, and formatted by William H. Gross [www.onthewing.org](http://www.onthewing.org/) © Feb 2016).  Owens object is not to illustrate the common evidences of genuine religion, or the grounds on which we may conclude that a man is sincere in his religious profession. It is an inquiry rather into the evidences on which the Elect of God, in any process of self-scrutiny, may ascertain the reality of their own faith. Ascribing to faith all the importance which is due it as the instrumental cause of justification, Owens suspends the entire question of faith concerning an Arminian or Scotian views so prevalent in his day…that is; salvation by works righteousness and/or the concept of universal salvation. There is to be no question in the mind of true believers, *“This is the testimony which God gives, that great and sacred truth which he himself bears witness to — namely, that he has freely prepared eternal life for those who believe, or provided a way of salvation for them. And what God so prepares, he is said to give, because of the certainty of its communication. So grace was promised and given to the elect in Christ Jesus before the world began, 2Tim 1:9; Tit 1:2. And that grace is so to be communicated to them, in and by the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, that it is the only way by which God will give eternal life to anyone. It is therefore wholly in Christ, and to be obtained by him, and to be received from him. Upon our acquiescence in this testimony, on our approval of this way of saving sinners, or our refusal of it, our eternal safety or ruin absolutely depends. And it is reasonable that it should be so. For in our receiving of this testimony of God, we "set to our seal that God is true," Joh 3:33.”*Owen then writes, *“That true and saving faith, in all storms and temptations, in all darknesses and distresses, will evidence itself to the comfort and support of those in whom it exists, by a constant, universal approval of the whole will of God, concerning our holiness and obedience, both in general and in every particular instance of it.”* This book is among one of  his hardest to weed through but that is by design. Just like His book on Mortification and Death of Death he states clearly that he wishes to push his readers to begin to consider what he is saying and he writes so we have to stop and re-read 2 or 3 times to take it in. He is not interested in his books being read for pleasure but for edification only.

**64.  RETURN TO THE GOSPEL: INTRODUCTORY ESSAY TO JOHN OWEN’S DEATH OF DEATH IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST,**by J.I. Packer. **DEATH OF DEATH IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST**first appeared in in 1684 and is a profound exploration of Christ's atoning sacrifice and its implications for salvation. This work is a defense of the doctrine of limited atonement, arguing that Christ's death was specifically and fully effective for the elect, not universally for all humankind. It's a theological treatise that challenges the broader, more universal view of redemption, emphasizing the sovereignty and power of God's plan of salvation. Packer’s simple but profound way of writing makes his passion clear in that he agrees whole heartedly with this work. Packer also is the one 20th Century theologian who was willing to admit that Owen is a bit of a purposeful difficult read. *“It has, no doubt, a certain clumsy dignity; so has Stonehenge; but it is trying to the reader to have to go over sentences two or three times to see their meaning, and this necessity makes it much harder to follow an argument. The present writer, however, has found that the hard places in Owen usually come out as soon as one reads them aloud. The second obscuring factor is Owen’s austerity as an expositor. He has a lordly disdain for broad introductions which ease the mind gently into a subject, and for comprehensive summaries which gather up scattered points into a small space. He obviously carries the whole of his design in his head, and expects his readers to do the same.* *Owen felt, however, that he had a right to ask for hard study, for his book was a product of hard work (“a more than seven-years’ serious inquiry...into the mind of God about these things, with a serious perusal of all which I could attain that the wit of man, in former or latter days, hath published in opposition to the truth”), and he was sure in his own mind that a certain finality attached to what he had written.”*But Packer concludes that no matter how hard Death of Death is it is well worth the toil. *“The****Death of Death****is a solid book, made up of detailed exposition and close argument, and requires hard study, as Owen fully realised; a cursory glance will not yield much. (“READER.... If thou art, as many in this pretending age, a sign or title gazer, and comest into books as Cato into the theatre, to go out again—thou has had thy entertainment; farewell! ”*Packer states that Owen was bent on making sure that we all understand this simple truth, *“The old true gospel stand in contrast with the new gospel… Arminianism or Universalism.”*And he ends with these words, *“We would conclude by repeating that the reward to be reaped from studying Owen is worth all the labour involved, and by making the following observations for the student’s guidance. (1.) It is important to start with the epistle “To the Reader,” for there Owen indicates in short compass what he is trying to do, and why. (2.) It is important to read the treatise as a whole, in the order in which it stands, and not to jump into parts III. and IV. before mastering the contents of Parts I. and II., where the biblical foundations of Owen’s whole position are laid. (3.) It is hardly possible to grasp the strength and cogency of this massive statement on a first reading. The work must be read and re-read to be appreciated.”*Packer’s assessment was for the purpose of a new publishing and he himself reiterates throughout this essay that the old gospel **IS** the Gospel of the Bible and everything else is false.

**65.  THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS: From Fig Leaves to Faith** by Martyn Lloyd-Jones (2009). What is before us is a collection of 9 sermons that Martyn Lloyd- Jones preached through the years on the first 12 chapters of Genesis. Per his particular style of always presenting the Gospel we see this throughout this book…hence the Name **THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS.**The publishers say that these sermons have never been produced anywhere else making this book an absolute gem if this is true. While mostly talking from the fall to the call of Abraham he gives a sufficient back story to know where we came from what we had in our grasp and what we lost by one simple choice to eat what we had been commanded not to eat. However, that isn’t the end of the story. Though man’s story is filled with shame and pain and sorrow and arrogance and evil…God has had a plan from before the beginning to redeem His own from our sin….hence the gospel in Genesis. Everything we need to now about God’s plan of redemption comes from these first 11-12 chapters. He pointedly asks, *“The Bible tells us the answer to the two questions we should all be asking. The first is, why are things as they are? The second is, how can they be put right? That is the whole problem, is it not? It really comes down to that: diagnosis and treatment. But here lies the rub, the difficulty. The world really does not want to consider that first question. It is only interested in the second. And the world does not like the Bible because it says that you cannot come to the second question unless you have truly understood the first. The Bible stands against us at that very point and says, you cannot have the treatment until you have submitted to the diagnosis. But the world hates this diagnosis.* *But that brings me to my next principle, which is this: in spite of all this, man is foolish enough to try to evade the consequences of his own sinful action. He is still trying to clutch at certain blessings that he desires. Here it is put in this form: God said, “Behold, the man is become as one of us.” You see there the doctrine of the Trinity, do you not? God is not talking to angels or to men. God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are having a conversation among themselves. “Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever .. .”( Genesis 3: 22). Because of that possibility, God decided to drive him out of the garden. In other words, God knew that man in sin would act in this manner, that though in his folly he had brought calamity upon himself by his disobedience, he would now stretch out his hand and clutch at that tree of life so he could still go on living. Though he was fallen and sinful and had the knowledge of evil, he would continue to defy God. So God sent him away. It is at that point that I see most clearly of all the parallel between man at the beginning, the moment he fell, and man as he is at this present time. Indeed, I would venture to assert that this one statement is the whole explanation of the history of civilization. Read your history books. Do not just take it from me. Do not only read your Bible—read your secular history books. And do not only read about kings and marriages and births and wars and deaths, read about the history of thought. Go back and read Greek philosophy. Read mythology, and read about people planning their utopias.”*But he also speaks clearly that it was a “good” thing that God expelled us from the garden part of his grace to us so His own would be able to receive eternal life from Him clean and whole. Then he ends with Abraham. And consider this small excerpt, *““The whole point is that the call of Abraham should concern us because God is calling us to the same type of life. We can be friends of God. The New Testament tells us that Abraham is the father of all the faithful (Galatians 3: 6–9). Christians are described in the New Testament as “Abraham’s seed” (Galatians 3: 29). We are the children of Abraham because we are the children of faith. A Christian is someone who has done, in effect, the very thing that Abraham did. And, therefore, what can be more important for us than to discover what this is, because it is an essential part of the message of the Bible to say that the conditions of this life are exactly the same at this moment as they were in the days of Abraham. That is why, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the author, who is writing to Christian people and wants to strengthen them and to help them because they are faced with difficulties, says in effect, “You must walk and live in this life exactly as Abraham did” (Hebrews 11: 8–19). The writer has already mentioned Noah and Abel and will go on to talk about Moses and others. All these people were living the same type of life—this different, this godly life. And this is the life that is offered to us in the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So here is the great question for us: are we living this kind of life? Are we viewing everything as Abraham did? Do we have the same confidence that he had? Do we have the same joy? Do we have the same experiences? Or let me ask my second question: is this not the kind of life you would like to live?”*Since in most ways that matters Abraham’s world is the same as ours…it is the blood of Christ that makes us part of His family in which we can understand the focus and the future described for us within God’s Word.  A great read…one I should have read before.

**66.  WARS OF SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE A History from Beginning to End,**Copyright © 2019 by Hourly History. Another book preparing me for our trip to Scotland as we sought to survey some of the sights that make up their history. Our bus tour guide to the highlands made a statement which seemed odd to me an American.  He stated that Scotland had NEVER been conquered. We didn’t have time to have a long discussion on this subject but he adamantly stood behind that stamen.  That Scottish spirt was so evdent…almost like talking to a Texan. And this may be what he meant…the Scottish “spirit” has never been conquerored…but given their lack of so many freedoms (placed on them by their English leaders) we take for granted in this country I would dispute that as well. However, as this book points out and history records Scotland has been conquered multiple times in its existence. Though it wasn’t called Scotland at the time the Romans sort of conquered it in the early 2 and 3rd century. Then we have the Vikings laying claim to the land for a few hundred years…then the Danes then the Normans, controlling and unifying the whole island under their historic rule.  Everything changed with the Norman Invasion…from politics to schools to family life to language. For a while much of what was Anglo-Saxon ceased to exist in the united Norman Kingdom. But then there was the conquering over and over again by the English.  Oh the Scots had times of relative peace under the likes of Robert the Bruce and David II…but in many ways they were vassals to the English even then.  *“Robert the Bruce died on June 7, 1329, one month short of his 55th birthday. He left behind a country united, at peace and, virtually for the first time, fully in control of its own destiny. He was succeeded as king of Scots by his eldest son, David, who became King David II and would rule Scotland for more than 40 years.”*BUT, *“The Treaty of Berwick is generally taken by historians to mark the end of the Wars of Scottish Independence and the beginning of true Scottish independence. However, it did not bring an end to wars between Scotland and England. Skirmishes continued until the eighteenth century when another war ended with Scotland finally accepting English rule and becoming part of the United Kingdom. King David II ruled an impoverished Scotland on his return. The large ransom payments were scheduled to be made in ten annual installments.”*The on again and off again control by the English finally came to a head, *“Scottish independence effectively ended with the Act of Union of 1707 under which Scotland became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, ruled by a Parliament in London. This was reversed to an extent by the Devolution Referendum of 1997 in which Scotland voted for the creation of a devolved Scottish Parliament which was established in 1999. Many Scots still wish to see complete independence from the United Kingdom, and figures from the Wars of Scottish Independence, such as Wallace and Bruce, are used as icons by this movement.”*These little books by the Hourly History are very well done and they do a great job in summarizing the main facts for each subject and many of included in a Kindle Unlimited membership.

**67.  NORMAN CONQUEST A History from Beginning to End**Copyright © 2023 by Hourly History. If you haven’t ever read anything about the Norman Conquest of England this is a great book to begin your study. This Vikings and the Danes had sought control over this island for a long time…from perhaps the 4th Century onward…maybe even before. *“The Anglo-Saxons had had a unique culture and society that was quite different from anything else in Europe. It was a warrior society, drawing on the example of the Norsemen to produce leaders chosen principally for their military prowess. While by the ninth century, many Anglo-Saxons were Christians, there were still pagans who believed in their own gods. To many of the more civilized people on the European continent, England seemed an uncivilized and barbarian nation. Nevertheless, even mainland Europe was not immune to Viking attacks. In the northern part of present-day France, these were so persistent and so successful that Viking raiders were able to create their own small kingdom on the Channel coast. Eventually, this would become known as Normandy, the land of the Northmen…Norman’s for short.”*This time and space was a warring time.  Men sought more ground…more control…more resources…and while these things were true of the Norman’s that also sought stability and a measure of civility that has stayed in the British isle sione that time. Because of the on =-going battles William the Great…William the Conqueror…William 1st decides to invader the Anglo-Saxon stronghold and moves with great speed to conqueror all of the island and place it under his rule. It was not an easy task.  The warrior nature of the people resisted but to no avail…during his rampage he besieged a town seeking the town to surrender, but instead of surrendering right away, *“… its inhabitants responded with insults, hanging animal hides on the walls. This was an apparent reference to William’s maternal grandfather, a tanner by trade, and was intended to highlight his illegitimate status. Enraged, William took the town and had the hands and feet of all the captured males cut off. Other towns resisted William after this, but few were foolish enough to insult him.”*This invasion turned out to be one of those moments in history that would change drastically the direction of a whole people. The authors say, *“Few battles are truly seminal, changing the course of world events. What became known as the Battle of Hastings is one of those, changing the course of English history and, subsequently, the history of a large part of the world.”*Aside from the changes in governing…(bringing in a parliamentary type of system…implementing different farming technics, we also see things in the rank and file, and*… “Some effects of this are still discernable today. The Normans, for example, generally drank wine while the Anglo-Saxons drank ale. Wine drinking became associated with the ruling class while ordinary people drank beer, a situation that still exists (to some extent) in England today.”*Even language change with changes still in place in all English speaking places in the world.*“Gradually, over the course of 300 years, these languages merged to produce modern English, which still contains many Norman words and terms. The names of domestic animals, for example—cow, sheep, and pig—all originate in Old English, while the names of the meats they provide—beef, mutton, and pork—are Norman. Many English words relating to the legal system and military matters also come directly from Norman, including adultery, slander, surrender, and chivalry.”*The Normans,…Norseman…Viking truly did bring culture to the British isle and to the western World.

**68.  THE SUMERIANS A History from Beginning to End** Copyright © 2018 by Hourly History. I picked this one up because of my continuing study of people groups that formed After the flood and the tower of Babel. This particular history seeks to posit that the Sumerians WERE the first people…pre-dating Adam and Eve, maybe …and the flood story that they tell pre-dates Noah and the Ark. It speaks of them being the first city builders and the first ziggurat builders… “towers to the sky”…even before Babel. I was able to look at many of the artifacts from their society at the British Museum in London.  No one questions they existed but no one knows where they came from but they seek to put them back at the ‘dawn” of history to displace the biblical accounts. The general consensus is that these people show up on the scene around 3300 BC (again the problem…the Bible record is one of the few recorded histories that actually give us time-stamps to help us know the time we are talking about….most everything else is speculation to dissuade us from the biblical text). If this is true (which I doubt) then they would have existed years before because when they show up they come with a fully developed culture in tow… according to many **stele’s** and scrolls and writings they left behind. Now for my purposes this caused me to question when did they come into being?  The evidence does not have to lead us to sometime before Adam and Eve or before the Great flood. They have a flood story that is similar to the Flood story of the Bible but secular historians like this one would have us believe the Bible copied the Sumerian story to give us Noah and the Ark. The question is always which came first. Given the timeline that many biblical scholars agree on the Sumerians would have to come after God curses His children at Babel and disperses the language…which actually may clarify where they came from. They were part of those who came from Noah’s family who were commanded to be fruitful and multiply and go out into the earth…then they settled rather than continue exploring…the difference between settlers and explorers! The God cursed the people, their language and maybe their DNA and hence new people groups were formed. This book is far from the biblical account which is our primary source for faith and practice but it does highlight many of the facts and artifacts that we have discovered about this mysterious people group. Interesting the Bible does explicitly speak of the Sumerians but it does speak of another people group that will conqueror these folks the Akkadians. (think Sargon I and II.)

**69.  INTERVENTION(The Iron Fleet Book 2),**by Daniel Gibbs (2025) PFLOS has the upper hand and the *Margaret Thatcher* can do little to make a difference. The terrorists have captured 5000 Coalition citizen from New Rostov but the Coalition government is too afraid of war with the League to do anything about it. They have sent reinforcements to the Orion Belt but they are weeks away and the word has come down that the hostages need to be saved though they have to do it with at least one hand tied behind their back.  The reinforcements are not much more that a “peacekeeping force” with the *Lion of Judah* at the lead but they are weeks away and they need to find out where the hostages are being kept. Lt. Col. Arthur Hanson makes some decisions that may affect his career in the future but it is clear these terrorist will kill the hostages if they are not rescued. So the Margaret Thatcher takes measures into their own hands and they go after the PFLOS fleet and pick away at it one ship at a time.  They become public enemy number one to the PFLOS but always seem to slip away at just the right time.  The hit and run tactics are keeping the terrorists busy but more and more people are dying because the Coalition government is not willing to deal with PFLOS. Gen. Cohen send in the *Oxford* a spy ship that is loaded to the gills and he will get yelled at for it but not to worry.  Thankfully he did for this makes all the difference in the battle in time for the reinforcement fleet to arrive. Another rousing book by Daniel Gibbs with many of my favorite characters. The next book comes out next week…I can’t wait.

**70.  INDEPENDENCE: Starship Jericho Book 5**, by Toby Neighbors (2025).  The good news from the beginning is that this may not be the last installment of this series and there will be other stories spin off from this one. Lots of good characters in this series of book. Captain Darius starts out a bit peckish but ends up being a leader of men and women who are proud to serve with him. In this installment we see them taking on the vast resources of the Ashi warrior class of the always ruthless Galactic Imperium. The *Renegade,*the Arodoni ship that the Jericho became, is seemingly more than a match for the Imperium in that they don’t send their whole fleet. As they have found the free worlds and have come to Libertine to drop off human slaves they find they have once again been followed and they must do something to ensure the human race continues. After sending his crew and many others home on an alien vessel *Independence*with the help of GIGI Darius determines to make a last stand but things quickly change with the Ashi following the homebound vessel and the Captain and his small crew knowing that their last stand will be in the home system. Life and death are in the balance from start to finish. And there is the exciting conclusion…or is it?

**71.  FORSAKEN OUTPOST (First Colony Book 18),**by Ken Lozito (2025). Another amazing book of loyalty, intrigue and exploration along with the occasional space and ground fight we have come to expect from this author and this series as the CDF continues to expand into the universe. The Vemus are still a threat. But now there is the Phantoms…are they a threat or are they allies…only time will tell. IN testing of the new I-Drive developed by Noah it seems the Phantoms had a hand in sabotaging it sending Connor and their small crew of techs 5000 lights years away. Was there method in this madness as this change of events caused them to get in contact with a new race and an exiled Phantom that has a less than stellar reputation for telling the truth? And at the same time Ethan Gates and his wife and crew have located yet another Vemus Alpha that appears to be dead...but is it? The death throes of even a Vemus, it seems, can still be dangerous and the battle ensues to save his crew and most importantly his wife Cynergy from being infected. So on one side of the galaxy the Vemus…on the other side is this group led by Connor Gates, who is always in the thick of things, trying to find a way home.  It seems that deliverance will come from the least likely source and yet questions will remain unanswered. What will be the latest determinations in this latest installment? Will any of the current questions be answered…to anyone satisfaction? What is the future for the General and his family? I am assuming time will tell and hopefully there will be future installments in this on-going saga.

**72.  SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR (Extended Edition ,**written by J.R.R. Tolkien (1967), extended version edited by Verlyn Flieger with illustrations by Pauline Baynes (2005), eBook edition 2014. After coming back from England and especially having been at Oxford and the Kilns my desire to read more of both Lewis and Tolkien has come alive again. **Smith of Wootton Major**was the last story J.R.R. Tolkien wrote, and was also the last of his work to be published in his lifetime…and since then it has been published many times in collections  with many of his other works like **The Adventures of Tom Bombadil, Roverdom, Farmer Giles of Ham or Leaf by Niggle.**This particular story came about after he had begun to wind down his work on the Silmarillion and he had been asked to write an introduction to G.K. Chesterton’s children’s book **The Golden Keys**. Now unlike many of his short stories that were written for his children when they were young this story just popped into his mind in the mid 60’s. This is delightful story that parents ought to reclaim as with all his short stories to be read to their children. Technically speaking, this is a tale of a craftsman, the smith who journeys into the Otherworld of Faeries. But this is also Tolkien’s homage to the world of imagination he called Faërie–or Fairy or Fayery or Faery (his spellings varied but his concept remained consistent) from many years prior. **Smith of Wooten Major** was his purest, clearest and last presentation of that world, and of its effect on a human being who travels there. The story is the realization of his mind to the concept he put forward in his 1939 lecture-essay *“On Fairy-Stories”.* Here, Tolkien was at pains to point out the obvious but often overlooked fact that fairy tales are not about fairies, but about *“the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches.”*It is in its own right, as far as Tolkien was concerned, a true fairy story –a story of Faërie, *“the realm or state in which fairies have their being”*. That realm holds *“the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted.”*Though Tolkien stood absolutely opposed to his works being considered as philosophical allegories…there is much in this story that is in fact allegorical. This is not, however, philological allegory, rather, per Tolkien himself, the Hall is as the village-church, the Cook as the Parson, and Cooking as personal religion and prayer. The painting of the hall standing in for the reformation of the Church. Tolkien liked to use the term “applicability” in the place of allegory for in his mind *“applicability resides in the freedom of the reader”(the reader is free to decide what he sees)*rather than allegory, *“the purposed domination of the author.”* But these images may be completely invisible and are not necessary to see to enjoy this delightful Faery tale.

**73.  A GRIEF OBSERVED,**by C.S. Lewis in 1961(this printing with afterward by Chad Walsh 1976). The first time I made my acquaintance with this book was in the Spring of 1997 just a few months after our first son, Zachary’s death. The grief was so real and there were few things that could help me put into words the unusual way I was feeling until I read these opening lines of this book, *“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing. At other times it feels like being drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in.  It is so uninteresting. Yet I want others to be about me. I dread moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk with one another and not me.”*It has been 29 years (this year) since Zachary was killed in the car accident that took his life and so having been at the Kilns C.S. Lewis’ home) I find myself having picked it up again and I am taken back to the rawness of that loss. This book of course is the book Lewis wrote after his beloved wife Joy Gresham died of cancer. This book is his “journaling” to survive the *“mad midnight moments”,*through grief to return to his faith after such a devastating loss. He states at one point in his grief, *“Aren’t these notes the senseless writhings of a man who won’t accept the fact that there is nothing we can do with suffering except suffer it? Blessed are they that mourn, and I accepted it. I’ve got nothing that I hadn’t bargained for. Of course it is different when the thing happens to oneself, not to others, and in reality, not in the imagination.”*As I remember wandering  through his grief years ago reading these notes and he states in his process, *“I think I am beginning to understand why grief feels like suspense/fear. It comes from the frustration of man impulse that had become habitual. Thought after thought, feeling after feeling, action after action, had H. for their object. Now their target is gone. I keep on through habit fitting an arrow to the string; then I remember and have to lay the bow down. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history, and if I don’t stop writing that history at some quite arbitrary point, there is no reason why I should ever stop. Grief is like a long valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.”*This book helped me in ways I didn’t know at the time. Now looking back not only did it have a hand in me seeing the process it became part of that process as I have picked it up again.  But did Jack ever give up his faith…it doesn’t seem so but he did struggle with a lot of questions as we should be only the useful ones… the ones that lead us to this confession, *“I need Christ, not something that resembles Him. I want H., not something that is like her. A really good photograph might become in the end a snare, a horror, and an obstacle. Just like images of the Holy easily become holy images- sacrosanct.”*(“H” is that letter used for his wife’s name so that when this was first circulated Lewis didn’t want anyone to know these were his personal feeling. H stands for Helen which was Joy’s true first name though no one called her that.)As I reflect on almost 29 years without our first born I hope I can say with Lewis these words, *“Lord, are these your real terms? Can I meet H.(Z) again only if I learn to love you so much that I don’t care whether I meet her or not?”* Now that is a secure faith!

**74.  PREACHER AND PRAYER,**by E.M. Bounds (1835-1913) (Copyright 1916 and my copy is original from the Christian Witness Co., Chicago…purchased in Feb. 1917) E.M. Bounds was an American author and a member/pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. 9 of the 11 books he wrote were on prayer for the church. His theological positioning is mostly Arminian so the force of this book and others has that kind of slant to it since works are crucial in their thinking for one to be ultimately saved. But having said that there is very little to disagree with, though if these books were written today there would possibly wide disagreement with his approach even if one could not argue against his stance. This text is mostly focused on preachers but also the members of the church who should be praying that their ministers be praying men live iin a day when more churches are coming up with methods and programs and in the opening “salvo he makes this statement, *“Men ARE God’s method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoints plans, but men- men of prayer. ‘Pray without ceasing’ is the trumpet call to the preachers of the twentieth century.”*He wants us to remember the injunction of Acts 6:4 put upon all ministers by the apostles that we have been commissioned to pray as well as to teach/preach.  At the beginning of each chapter he opens with a prayer from a renowned divine not the least of which he uses Robert Murray McCheyne.  Here is one quote that stuck out at me, *“I ought to pray before seeing any one. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system.  It is unscriptural. Christ rose before the day and went into a solitary place. David says, ‘Early will I seek thee;...Thou shalt early hear my voice.’ Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness, and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed.  Then when in secret prayer the soul is often out of tune. I feel it is far better to begin with God…to see His face first, to get my soul near Him before it is near another.*” He makes the case over and over again that prayer is one of the profound characteristics of strong spiritual leadership. He then ends the book with a sentiment that I began with, *“The preacher must pray; the preacher must be prayed for.”*In these books thee is also usually many history lessons.  We get a look at the times of the author*, “In these days of hurry and bustle, of electricity and steam, men will not take time to pray.”*If that was the case then 115 years ago can you imagine how that has multiplied…might just be the reason the church is so weak today…because its ministers are not mighty prayers!

**75.  COUNTERSTRIKE (The Iron Fleet Book 3)**by Daniel Gibbs (2025). The Fleet finally arrives...such as it is. It is a small force sent to show force but not too much.  Thankfully the Colonel at the helm of this fleet is a no-nonsense type of leader…just the type Hanson prefers given how much trash is coming from his own government which refuses to deal with PFLOS according to their crimes. But even its size should be enough to handle what is left of the terrorists. But things are never that easy…for all of a sudden a Rand-class Leaguer ship shows up and it is bigger than everything else in the area so now the terrorists are back on top. The Colonel calls on Hanson and his “enhanced methods of interrogation” to get necessary information. It is easier this time…BUT…he sees his soul being lost in this and clearly half of his crew want him replaced and after getting some information and that led to a dry hole…Arthur Hanson literally has a come to Jesus moment in his cabin and he is brought to see that reckless, cruel and illegal behavior doesn’t enhance the position of those seeking the common good but rather destroys it. So carrying his guilt he seeks to make amends…but there is still a war on and while he tries to fess up to his superiors that is not working either. Arthur receives another plan …by “inspiration” it is implemented to great success leaving the League cruiser and less than a handful of ships in possession of PFLOS. A good day…but Hanson is still carrying the guilt. He has begun to win back the respect of the crew but it doesn’t seem right to him. His guilt is almost too much for him to bear as he sits in the office of the chaplain he receives some solace for the moment, *“Our lives as Christians are what the rest of the universe sees. Our actions should make nonbelievers question their disbelief in God.”* But that is because he doesn’t know the monster that is preparing to come their way and will strike without their knowledge. I have to wait till July to read the 4th installment **Danger Close.**

**76.  THE BIRD IN THE CAGE,**by Vavasor Powell (written from prison in London 1661, Monergism digital 2025). Vavasor Powell 1617 –October 27, 1670) was a Welsh Puritan, imprisoned for his role in a plot to depose King Charles II…hence the title of this book **The Bird in the Cage** since this was written from his time incarcerated. He labored for the reformation of the church in Wales, and He was also an ardent defender of Calvinism held disputations with popular Arminians of his day. Powell is considered the leading Welsh pastor/theologian of his time by many protestants in Wales even today, though most on this side of the pond…myself included have never heard of him. It is best to hear from him as to why he is writing this treatise/book, *“So that Satan, and his Instruments may the better introduce their own Doctrines; they make it their design and endeavor to batter down the Scriptures (for their Dagon, cannot stand before God’s Ark.) As the Jews make it death for any of their Religion, to read and keep the New-Testament. The Papists also, make it an Article of their Creed, that unwritten verities, (as they call them) and the Canons, and Traditions of their Church, are of equal authority with the Scriptures; and hold that they should not be translated into vulgar Languages, nor the Common-people be permitted to read them. Also the Quakers generally deny, the Scripture to be the Word of God, or a Rule; affirming there is no other Rule, Way, or Means, &c. but that which is manifest in men. Concerning God and his Attributes, Christ, and his Offices, the Holy Spirit, and it’s manifestations, the decrees of God before time, the two Covenants (viz. the Law and the Gospel) the wretched state of all men by Nature, and out of Christ; the freeness of God’s grace, in opposition to man’s free-will: The Doctrine of Justification, by the imputed Righteousness of Christ, apprehended, and received by Faith, Sanctification (distinct from Justification) wrought by the Spirit in us. Perseverance, Assurance, and growth in Grace by virtue of our union with Christ, and his spiritual in dwelling and operating in us.”*Having been arrested multiple times for his preaching and for his politics depending upon who was in power which changed a lot in the decades in which he wrote and preached he wanted to make sure to leave behind a clear and concise treatise for the true Christian to follow. This book is a moving reflection on suffering, persecution, and the perseverance of the saints. He says, *“Some Christians have four Thorns that grieve them, a Thorn of Affliction from God, a Thorn of Persecution from men, and a Thorn of Temptation from Satan, and of Corruption in themselves; which is the worst, and that which should trouble them most.”*He draws heavily from Scripture throughout to offer encouragement, exhortation, and comfort to the afflicted. Powell writes as one who shares in the sufferings of Christ and his church, addressing fellow persecuted believers with pastoral warmth and fervent exhortation since he experienced that suffering on a regular basis. This book is highly theological but it is also very devotional. *“A Believers assurance and chiefest joy, doth not arise from his Sanctification: (because that is imperfect here in degrees) but from his Justification. Learn by lighter crosses, to look and prepare for heavier.”* The work also serves as a historical document, shedding light on the sufferings of Welsh Nonconformists during the seventeenth century, making it valuable not only as a devotional work but also as a testimony to the resilience of the persecuted church. We need to read these guys for all the reasons above for when we find ourselves in these situations of hardship and suffering we will be better prepared.

**77.  LETTERS ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE,** by John Brown of Haddington (A Scottish minister seeking the advancement of the continuing reformation of the Scottish church in the 18th Century-1722-1787) (Originally published in 1799). This “book” is comprised of 14 letters to his friend Amelius (or this could just be for the purpose of making the letters more personal in nature) on Church Government.  Think Book of Church Order of the Day. His own stated purpose, *“Since the government, discipline, and order of Christ's Church are not matters of human invention, but of divine appointment. In an age where the authority of Christ in His Church is frequently challenged, it is vital for ministers and Christians alike to seek clarity from Scripture alone, these Letters on Church Government and Discipline are to provide a clear, biblical, and reasoned defense of Presbyterian church government, establishing its divine right and its necessity for the spiritual well-being of God's people.”*His style, being letters, are extremely pastorally warm and theological precise. His devotional approach covers more than just plain Church government but also the headship of Christ, the role of church officers (elders and deacons), the rights and privileges of the members and the proper exercise of Church discipline. He, unlike some in the church at the time, also shows how the church is NOT to be ruled in anyway by civil magistrates.  He reminds us that church government is not a necessary evil but one of divine appointment as long as it is the correct one. In a day where people frown on such talk this work theologically, devotionally, historically and scripturally put in in its proper place for the good of the church and the growth of the kingdom. *“No doubt, the children of visible saints are to be accounted members of the Christian church, till, by heathenish principles or practices, they warrant their ejection. The promise is to church-members and their children. God is their God, and the God of their seed after them. Their children are federally holy; and of such is the kingdom of God (Acts 2:38, 39; Gen. 17:10; 1 Cor. 7:14; Mark 10:14).”*These letters are as relevant today as when they were first penned. *“Nothing is represented as more plainly hurtful to men, or dishonoring to God, than contention and division in the church (Jam. 3:15, 16; 1 Cor. 3:1; Mark 3:24). It springs from ignorance, selfishness, pride, passion, jealousy, neglect, of important duties, stiff peremptoriness and the like (Rom. 15:1, 2; Prov. 13:10 and 15:8 and 10:12). It marks the anger of the Lord (Lam. 4:16). It eats out the life of religion; produces reviling, confusion, and ever evil work. It murders, it tears asunder, the mystical body of an adored Redeemer, and hinders others to join her; how shocking the crime!”*The only other book that explains this position better is Thomas Witherow’s book, **The Apostolic Church: Which is it?**Witherow’s book was written nearly 60 years later at a time the Church needed, once again, to hear about the divinely approved polity of the Church.

**78.**  **THE GREAT DIVORCE: A Dream**, by C. S. Lewis( Copyright © 1946, C. S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Copyright renewed 1973 C. S. Lewis Pte. Ltd).  One of the men God used to bring Lewis back to himself…or to Himself the first time was the writings of George MacDonald. And George MacDonald guides him in this account/dream. *“‘Ye can sit and talk to me then,’ he said, making room for me on the stone. ‘I don’t know you, Sir,’ said I, taking my seat beside him. ‘My name is George,’ he answered. ‘George MacDonald.’ ‘Oh!’ I cried. ‘Then you can tell me! You at least will not deceive me.’ Then, supposing that these expressions of confidence needed some explanation, I tried, trembling to tell this man all that his writings had done for me. I tried to tell how a certain frosty afternoon at Leatherhead Station when I first bought a copy of***Phantastes***(being then about sixteen years old) had been to me what the first sight of Beatrice had been to Dante: Here begins the New Life. I started to confess how long that Life had delayed in the region of imagination merely: how slowly and reluctantly I had come to admit that his Christendom had more than an accidental connection with it, how hard I had tried not to see that the true name of the quality which first met me in his books is Holiness. He laid his hand on mine and stopped me*.” In the great story telling of Lewis we have an allegory concerning a bus ride from Hell to heaven. There is so much in here about good and evil… about grace and judgment…about depravity and the holiness of God. The “interviews” are the part of this book that is so real if the reader is paying attention for they depict all of us in one setting or another…uncertainty, comfortableness, lust and misguided love or simply self-preservation. Those who turn away never realize just how good the good news is…they only want to argue over its veracity and how it applies to their situation rather than thinking of God and His purposes. As Lewis grew in his faith he struggled with election and universalism. It seemed to him that Paul speaks of the ALL who can be saved…while wrestling with only those who call on the name of the Lord WILL be saved. He didn’t struggle with the depravity of man so much as he lived that every day. He understood the needs of men and how shallowly we consider love in this life. He reflects all this and more in this story for the ages…a story by the way that

he himself says his picture of the afterlife *“is not even a guess.”*

**79.**  **JOHN KNOX: SCOTLAND’S REFORMER,**by William Taylor (1885 and then published again for print and digitalized 2017. Much of the work for this biography came from Knox own 6 volumes set of works as well as his History of the Scottish Reformation. So a lot has come directly from Knox himself or through one who wrote down the things he said to be published. So much of this work is OT based in speculation or personal prejudice for or against Knox. It is well worth reading. I found it in Edinburgh Castle’s book store and knew I would need to get this on Kindle for my collection and it was well worth it for history and theology and church government. I am going to give a series of quotes along these lines: History; When he was a galley slave of the French- *“but they could never make the poorest of that company to give reverence to that idol.” He adds the following narrative, and from the ironic humour that plays about his style as he recites it, we cannot doubt that he was himself the hero of the story. “Soon after the arrival at Nantes, their great salve was sung, and a glorious (gaudy) painted board was brought in to be kissed, and amongst others was presented to one of the Scotchmen then chained. He gently said, ‘Trouble me not; such an idol is accursed, and therefore I will not touch it.’ The patron and the arguesyn (i.e. sergeant who commanded the forçats) with two officers, having the chief charge of all such matters, said, ‘Thou shalt handle it,’ and so they violently thrust it to his face, and put it betwixt his hands, who seeing the extremity, taking the idol, and advisedly looking about, he cast it into the river, and said, ‘Let our lady now save herself; she is light enough; let her learn to swim….*His relationship with Mary of Scots-  *“Much has been said of the bearing of Knox towards Queen Mary, and said, as we believe, most unjustly, for though he felt himself constrained to oppose her course, and would not yield to her wishes, yet he was never rude, or irreverent, or ungentlemanly. As Carlyle says, “he was never in the least ill-tempered with her Majesty;” and most of those who accuse him in this matter, we shrewdly suspect, have never read the accounts of his interviews with her, but have simply accepted the common babblement which has been so long current regarding them. No candid student of the rehearsal of these interviews in Knox’s History, we are sure, could refuse to endorse the accuracy of Carlyle’s statement of the case when he says “Mary often enough bursts into tears, oftener than once into passionate long continued fits of weeping, Knox standing with mild and pitying visage, but without the least hair’s-breadth of recanting or recoiling, waiting till the fit pass, and then with all softness but with all inexorability taking up his theme again.”*Theology; *“‘Come unto Me all ye that labour and are laden, and I will ease you.’” Truly a golden sentence, touching the very quick of all Church controversies, and emphasizing the principle never to be forgotten, that we must find our way to the Church through Christ, and not to Christ through the Church….Knox was the earliest, and by no means the least noteworthy, of the Puritans, for the principle which he advocated was one which he was as ready to apply to ceremonies in the reformed churches as to the idolatries of the Romish worship. The utterance of these sentiments by him at this time marks the beginning of that movement which has continued even until now, and which in its progress, among other less conspicuous results, called into existence the various nonconforming churches of England; inspired the covenanters of Scotland to begin and carry through their long and painful struggle with the second Charles; widened the civil liberties of Great Britain; and planted the seed from which the American Republic has grown into stateliness and strength…* *Knox declares unequivocally that it would be wrong for Protestant believers to seek baptism for their children from popish priests, he yet as plainly affirms that a man who had been baptized in infancy in papistry ought not to be rebaptized when he cometh to knowledge, because Christ’s institution could not be utterly abolished by the malice of Satan or by the abuse of man.”*Church government was exclusively Presbyterian in form; *“The elders and deacons were to be chosen by the people annually, from among a list given by the minister, and if Churches be of smaller number than that such office-bearers can be chosen from among them, they may be joined to the next adjacent Church. We have here therefore the “rotatory” eldership, as it has been called by some in America, recognised in principle, and the reason given for it is “lest that by long continuance of such officials men presume upon the liberty of the Church.”*This book covers a lot of ground and is well worth a person’s time…and I end with what was said by many who have come after Knox concerning him, *““Behind him was the cross of his Lord; before him was the throne at which he was to be accountable, and between these two he stood ‘watching for souls as one that must give account.’”*

**80.**  **THE NEW COMMAND RENEWED Or Love One Another A Gospel Command Being an Endeavor After the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, by Several IUNity Princilples, Among which There are Ten Rules for a Right Understanding of Scripture, Very Useful for These Divided Times, A Puritan Plea for Brotherly Love,**The New Command Renewed, by Ralph Venning (1621-1674) (originally published 1654 digitalized by Monergism 2025) At this particular time when the protestant Church had so many enemies from the Crown and Rome, this treatise is given to seek to unify the church in the command of Christ to love one another as He had loved us. It is a long treatise because of the need to get as much biblical information into the hands of the people who were fighting one another instead of the real enemy…which is more self-love than either the Crown or Rome. Again the history lesson here is amazing but his theological thought through the whole of the Bible to help us see the need and command of God to love one another as Christ loved us doesn’t get any better than this. True Christian love, he shows, is not rooted in feelings that change with the wind but in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the believer’s union in Christ.  We are without excuse …we must love one another or we are liars and not f the faith. He doesn’t hold his punches but he is not over legalistic either, for the Lord commands this and he reminds us in a pastoral way that does not give us an excuse. He says, *“You cannot maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace unless you forbear one another in love, as appears most plainly by their connection, Eph. 4.2, 3. forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace: this endeavor for unity and peace will be lost unless God, who bears with us, teaches us also to bear one with another.”*But one comment hit home with our current fights on the internet, *“Alas! Do not people speak bitterly against bitter speaking; and write bitterly against bitter writings, thereby becoming inexcusable? For in judging others they condemn themselves, being doers of the same things. Oh, that Christians would overcome evil with good, passion with meekness, bitterness with sweetness; for a soft tongue breaks the bone, Prov. 25.15. Oh, how did Abigail's affection conquer David's passion, though heated sevenfold! And how did David's kindness to Saul make Saul confess his unkindness to David! However others behave toward us unbecomingly as Christians, our behavior toward them should be no other than what is fitting for Christians.”*You can actually find pictures of an original copy online of this. It is hard to read the old English but it is really cool. This is one of those book on Christ “new” commandment to Hus that is worth reading regularly.

**81.  I, STARSHIP: REVOLUTION SPACE , BOOK 4,**by Scott Bartlett. Henry, aka Sgt. Morgan, the starships RM (reconstituted mind) is put in a place of command this type around. With Capt. Seemey away and a revolution beginning he takes over per orders…but there is an internal revolution occurring upon the *Interchange*that even Henry is not aware of. Henry has NOT risen to the point of other RM’s which has been a good thing on one hand because they have each had a breakdown of catastrophic proportion destroying their ships and crew because of so much isolation in space.  And while Henry has had his moments they have taken measures to keep him sane in recent trips. But all of that is about to change. Commander Pyle has been plotting all along since he is part of a breakaway group who considers themselves to be superior humans (the Stewards). But now he has brought in the XO to his schemes as well right under Seemey’s nose and it is only a matter of time before they spring their trap. Being in the midst of a revolution and trying to save colonists that may or may not want to be saved is a hard balance and place to be for Henry and Capt Seemey. The next installment may wrap up the centuries long journey. I have not always spoken well of this series of book namely because while there is good character development in the crew there is not much in the RM which should have been in a different place from where he was after the 2nd book…but alas, I continue to pick these up and read them since I like this author so well. Next up:  **I, Starship: The Scattering Stars.**

**82.  CHRISTIAN LOVE: WHEREIN THE NATURE, PROPERTIES, EXCELLENCY, AND FRUITS OF THIS CHRISTIAN GRACE ARE DISTINCTLY EXPLAINED, AND THE CONSTANT EXERCISE OF IT ENFORCED FROM THE MOST POWERFUL MOTIVES; WITH A PARAPHRASE UPON THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS, DIVIDED INTO FIVE CHAPTERS.,**by Hugh Binning. (1627-1653- a Scottish philosopher and theologian also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland-- First Printed at Edinburgh, 1743, digitalized by Monergism 2021).  This book is based in this wonderful scripture, ***"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*(John 13:35)**…as well as I Corinthian 13. He premise is clear: As believers in Christ we MUST love as He loved and commands us to love. He states, *“****John 13:34, 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."****If all that was in me did not alienate his love from me, how should any thing in others estrange our love to them? If God be so kind to his enemies, and Christ so loving, that he gives his life for his enemies to make them friends, what should we do to our enemies, what to our friends? There is a special stamp of excellency put on this affection of love, that God delights to exhibit himself to us in such a notion,****"God is love:"****And so holds out himself as the pattern of this,****"Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love," Eph. 5:1, 2.****This is the great virtue and property which we should imitate.”*As believers this should not be a burdensome task.  It is not hard for those who are in Christ, ***“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us," Eph. 5:2. H****ere are the topics of the most vehement persuasion. There is no invention can afford so constraining a motive,—Christ so loving us, that he gave himself a sacrifice for sin. O then! who should live to himself, when Christ died for others? And who should not love, when God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all?****"God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. 8:32; 5:8.”***Along with the other books I have read on Christian Love (see this list above) this sets before us an extremely clear and easier way to achieve the command of God in His Children.  Impossible with non-believers but all things are possible for them who are in Christ Jesus. He ends with this, *“I lay down this, then, as the fundamental principle of true zeal,—it is like charity, that seeketh not its own things. But to make the nature of it clear, I give you three characters of it—Verity, charity, and impartiality. I say, it hath truth in it, a good thing for the object, and knowledge of that good thing in the subject, for the principle of it,****‘It is good to be zealously affected always n a good thing.’ (Gal. 4:18).***

**83.  THE BATTLES FOR CHATTANOOGA, text by Peter Cozzens (2023). This booklet was published by Eastern National for the National Park Civil War Series. They produce smaller and larger booklets on many of the battles of our country from the Indian wars through the Civil War along with various assorted battles in the first and second World Wars.  Between words and beautiful photos and illustrations and copies of paintings the stories are told of the strategies , the victories and the failures of each battle. These books also highlight the main charcaters like Gen. Bragg and Gen. Rosecram along with Gen. Ulysses Grant who ultimately gain another victory over the South securing the death nail of the South’s opposition and speeding the end of the War. It also highlights the sacrifices that men and women on both side made for what they believed to be “just” causes. We have many of these books on different National Park locations from across America. Aside from highlighting battles you cvan find books on Ellis Island, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Statue of Liberty…all important places and events that make up our history as a nation. These are excellent resources and well written and to be commended at each National Park store there is or at**[**www.ShopANP.org**](http://www.shopanp.org/)

**84.  WHEN CHRISTIANS DISAGREE: Lessons from the Fractured Relationship of John Owen and Richard Baxter, by Tim Cooper (2024). We often ponder why it is that there are times that even the best of us can’t get along. Tim Cooper who has been taking it upon himself of late to modernized and condense some of the most difficult of books from men like Baxter and Owen sets us up from a modern day understanding of what may have caused much of the on-going rift between these two 17th Century giants of the faith. The author highlights their human stories as best as we can know. Richard Baxter wrote a lengthy autobiography while most of what we know of Owen is from bits and pieces concerning his younger years and then all of his accomplishments during his ministry. Both as many were in those days staunch supporters of their own perspectives. Owen a Congregationalist and Baxter sort of a Presbyterian when that name and polity was still being put in place. Both had more doctrinally in common than their differences so as Cooper posits perhaps it was more personality than it was doctrine the separated them in their discourse towards one another.  Baxter saw Owen and a elitist hanging out with the upper crust of the military and the church…which he himself was more “blue-collar” in his approach having been embedded with the military in the recent Civil War and his modest upbringing. Cooper focuses on these differences in personality, temperaments and experiences so that we might see the need to further understand those we disagree with. He makes the case that neither men fully sought o understand how their tift was affecting the greater body of the church…it seemed that Baxter really didn’t care as long as his perspective on things were fully heard and even then …well let’s say he wasn’t always satisfied.  And Owen for all his lofty theological teaching it is clear from this assessment that he let his pride get in the way of even trying to understand Baxter. It seems that both men had set in stone what they thought of the other long before they even ever met. The author sums it up well, *“They might also have paid far more attention to those many verses in Scripture that summon us to unity and concord. This is, after all, a driving theme through the whole*of the Bible.*“Behold, how good and pleasant it is / when brothers dwell in unity!” (Ps. 133: 1). On the night before he died, Jesus prayed to the Father for all his disciples, “Keep them in your name . . . that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17: 11). That is a high prayer indeed. We see the same concern expressed throughout the letters of Paul. He instructed the Philippian Christians, “Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2: 2). He called on the believers at Thessalonica, “Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5: 13). He gave a similar command to the church in Rome: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom. 12: 18). Scripture seems clear on this point: disunity, discord, and division are a reproach to the cause of Christ. Yet it seems that such verses were obscured in Baxter’s and Owen’s mind because the differences between them loomed so large.* *Finally, a few of the questions Baxter and Owen disagreed over now seem strange and unimportant. This is a useful reminder that the issues that so energize us right now in our present moment might show themselves, in time, to have no importance at all. For that reason, we might hold them more lightly and be more reluctant to allow them to break the (too often) fragile unity of the people of God. With those thoughts in mind, you might ponder the following questions.”* This is an excellent case study on these two men and ought to be read by any and all wanting a better understanding of these two.**

**85.  THE PROVERBS OF MIDDLE-EARTH, by David Rowe forward by Peter Kreeft (2017). This is a most interesting study into most of the characters and the author of Lord of the Rings, Rowe is a lifelong reader of Tolkien and one who over the years has sought to understand the greatness of this work. He makes many observations about Tolkien…this is an interesting couple, *“the Drúedain are in some ways akin to Tolkien, CS Lewis, and the other Inklings: a group of pre-modern reactionaries born out of their time, rejecting urbanism and industrialism, and cynical of ‘progress.’( 331) While the Inklings were forced to continue living and working in mainstream society (their only haven being an intellectual and imaginative one, shared with like minds), the Drúedain were able to separate themselves physically; hidden in the forest and safe from intrusion.* *While many fans and critics have attempted to portray Tolkien as one of his characters—to some he is the wise old sage Gandalf, to others a stay-at-home hobbit—he himself said that as far as any character is like him it is Faramir. The two share many practical similarities. Although one should not go as far as to say that Faramir is Tolkien, perhaps it might be fair to assert that Faramir is Tolkien as he would have liked himself to be. Tolkien’s claim to be like Faramir concludes with him adding, with typical bathos, ‘except that I lack… Courage.’”*In this work he works the social structure, the history and the philosophy of the main charcaters out through their proverbs learned and made up. There is so much here to commend this work to any who are ardent Tolkien and Middle-earth students. He speaks of Tolkien as one to whom he n]knew well…but it is his insight in continuously reading and studying that leads him to such conclusions as these. *“He believed that the creative process of myth-making is nothing short of a sacred task; that humans have a special responsibility to reflect their Creator by becoming sub-creators. As a result, Tolkien sought to bring into being an internally cohesive sub-creation, credible in every way; having the air of being well-worn and lived in, not fresh from the oven. But this ambition (in Tolkien’s estimation, at least) could only be fully realised by the handcrafting of an entire world—from the minutiae of geology and regional flora to the dealings of characters and cultures over the course of millennia. Each intricately detailed leaf on Tolkien’s Tree demonstrates this tireless pursuit of depth and a convincing ‘inner reality.’ That is the highest function of fantasy: truth, insight, understanding. Those who dislike Tolkien always dislike the genre itself, scorning its ‘escapism.’ They forget that Fantasy does not only help us escape from circumstances, but also from falsehoods, self-deceptions, and narrowness of vision; from the familiarity that breeds not only contempt but also boredom with ourselves and each other. It helps us to escape into wisdom.”*But this book is about the proverbs of Middle-earth like Boromir’s rhyming,*“The wolf that one hears is worse than the orc that one fear’s.”* Or Aragorn’s answer, *“Where the warg howls, there also the orc prowls.”* Or yet another by Gildor, *“Do not meddle in the affairs of Wizard, for they are subtle and quick to anger.”* A  proverb has been defined as; *a proverb is a concise statement of an apparent truth that has had, has, or will have currency among the people. Problematically, this definition implies that virtually any phrase can be a proverb, if it gains ‘currency among the people’ as a conscious reference to received wisdom. No parameters of style or content are defined. This boundary-free definition is frustrating, but it is accurate.*Whether it is the Gaffer or Butterbur or Aragon, Boromir, Bombadil, or Frodo…each person or thing, as in the case of Treebeard…each culture has proverbs that define them. Borrowing of a proverb can also alter its meaning: in the mouth of the Gaffer or Tom Cotton, *Short cuts make long delays* would be an admonishment against slipshod work, pointing out that doing something badly often means doing it twice; but coming from Pippin, who has no work to do, it becomes a warning to cross-country ramblers. Tolkien obviously borrows proverbs from the Real world… but in his genius he makes new ones to go with the worlds he created. And all of this and more is worth commending. An excellent read that you want to read slowly as not to miss anything.**

**86.  CALVINISM FOR A NEW GENERATION: A Series from byFaith.  This is a helpful tool for the church today. In this booklet are 5 pastors and leaders who explain the five points of Calvinism and how they especially speak to the angst and trauma in our society today. In previous generations Calvinism actually did have a wide spread acceptance (irregardless of what you have heard and been taught in the 21st century) …a wide acceptance in part because it really addressed the felt pain of the times: guilt and shame. Today we are so caught up in self that we have lost sight of truth…God’s truth which is easily summed up in these 5 points: Totally Depravity (or Total Inability as R.C. Sproul preferred), in an age of victimization; Unconditional Election in an age of inclusivity; Limited Atonement in an age of shamelessness; Irresistible Grace in an age of individualism; and Perseverance of the Saints in an age of anxiety. This booklet is an easy read and a timely addition to Christian reading.  We are reminded that we are NOT victims in this world but agents of reconciliation. *“That the wonder of the Gospel is that in His mysterious good pleasure God hasn’t been fair towards us, but just and merciful none the less. You and I haven’t earned anything from God except condemnation (that would have been fair). Yet we. Who are His, will receive Christ’s reward. You and I would have nothing if left to ourselves. But we haven’t been left to ourselves.”*We do not have be ashamed any longer for our debt has been paid by Christ. *“Jesus atoned for our failures and made us ‘the rightness of God’.”* The essence of worldly stories is, “Here is how to live.” The essence  of Christianity is, “Here’s how Jesus lived and died for you.” *“When God changes you, there is no stopping Him, His grace cannot be resisted.”*We are preserved in this anxiety ridden world by these simple words*, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you my rest…”* (Matt. 11:28) Hopefully we can get some of these and make sure everyone in the church reads it.**

**87.  THE LORD’S SUPPER AS THE SIGN AND MEAL OF THE NEW COVENANT: (Short Studies in Biblical Theology) by Guy Prentiss Waters (2019). Guy Waters a PCA Teaching elder is applauded across the spectrum for his masterful work on a subject that has been the topic of discussion and “cussin” since the Reformation. He takes about 2/3rd of the book to wade and guide us through the Old Testament covenant administrations and their signs and meals, so that we can see just how NEW this sacrament is and how it is tied to Christ death and resurrection in a way that nothing is in OT is. This is a helpful book for the laity to come to grips with the meaning and purpose of the Lord’s Supper. It is short enough not to scare away even guys…and it is comprehensive enough to not miss the highlights of God redemptive work and His work of grace through this sacrament. I would also recommend Keith A. Mathison’s book THE LORD’S SUPPER: Answers to Common Questions. Both books address the biblical, theological, historical and practical questions relating to the Supper with insight and simplicity. But if you can only get one get this one by Prentiss simply because no one that I knows deals with the covenant meals in the way Prentiss does which brings us naturally to the Lord’s Supper. *““When we look at the various covenants that God made with people in Scripture, a striking pattern emerges—God appointed a sign to accompany the covenant that he made. The covenant signs were physical and tangible objects susceptible to the five senses. They were not newly created but already existing in the world of the first recipients. Each sign was given to the covenant community as a visible and perpetual reminder of God’s goodness in and through that particular covenant. God also intended his signs to confirm the truth of his covenant promises to the faith of his people.* *The physical or material blessings that Israel enjoyed from the Lord were never ends in themselves. They were always designed to point beyond themselves to the spiritual blessings that God provided in covenant with his people. For Israel, they were to be the occasions and even means by which God’s people would come to experience the eternal blessings that God supplied through the work of his Son. 3 For this reason, God frequently appealed to feasts, meals, and food in speaking to his people through the Prophets.”*His analysis is easy to translate to our children as well… so I recommend this book.**

**88.  REALITY CLASH: (Galaxy Bridge Book 8) by Daniel Gibbs, Steve Rzasa (2025). Joint Base Sagittarius Arch in the Zan System Sextans-B Galaxy is under siege and the less than 500 men and women who have not been captured are working along with Col. Larra to keep the Mifreen busy with ongoing sabotage. Gen David Cohan is loaded for bear at the Mifreen home world wanting to take down their computerized nanite driven boat construction that they are sending against the humans and any other species that stands in the way of their NetSim…(slavery by internet, if you will). The battle rages on both front with success not guaranteed on either front. The need for divine intervention is never so necessary in both places. Finally Larra and his troops are able to get word out to others of the need to retake the station and that there is ongoing work being done to overthrow the captors…but will it come at the right time?  Are there any out there that can hear and are willing to come? Can the *Lion of Judah* deliver a knockout blow at the Mifreen home world? Or will all be lost as they go up against outnumbered odds? These last ditch efforts must work given that so much is at stake including each commanders wife and children. Another excellent book by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa in this universe that comprises dozens of books at this point. I am so looking forward to reading the conclusion of this series when it comes out in a couple of weeks and at the same time hope for more.**

**89.  GRIMM LEGACY: (Grimm's War Book 8) by Jeffery H. Haskell (2025). Again, even though it has been almost a year since the last book, the reader simply picks up where they stopped like a visit with a good friend. It is as if no time has elapsed since your last time together. In this installment many of the crew of the *Interceptor*, the shark of a ship, have been reassigned to *Battleship Seventeen* and told to give her a shakedown run which is also a way of showing off the flag ship of the fleet. Jacob misses his old ship but she will be used in combat training so she is NOT being completely mothballed…yet. This new ship is huge and doesn’t afford the intimacy with the crew that *Interceptor* allowed. An assignation attempt on the President puts things in a bit of a different mold. His wife Nadia, no longer and ONI agent sets out to find out what is going on none the less and after losing and arm (her cybernetic one) she is hindered but not stopped.  The Caliphate is at it again and the Fleet Admiral is taking every ship to meet the threat leaving Alexandria, the capitol, with only one ship to protect it from a blind attack force. The space battles and the intrigue on the ground trying to discover who tried to kill the President keep these pages turning. Even though Jacob has an untried ship a second attack force is found made up of most arcane ships from a hundred years ago but tucked in between them is a secret weapon and it is up to Jacob to take care of this threat by himself…with the best crew in the space Navy to be sure. One more time…he faces the threat outnumbered and outgunned…that just means that it is a target rich environment! No one on Alexandria knows of this threat and Jacob is going to keep it that way even if it means him suffering later for not reporting this fleet. *“Fear, though, can be defeated with courage. Courage is gained when your heart tells you this is right. When you know what you should do, even if you also know it could lead to your death. Courage is freedom in its truest form. Through courage and training, we can prevail. We can defeat the enemy fleet, hurt them badly enough they’re either forced to withdraw, or they crash in vain against our defenses, to fail in their goal because of our commitment. You were all handpicked for this boat. Chosen by Admiral Villanueva herself. She knew we had a hard job ahead of us and wanted the best on Seventeen. Well, she got the best. From the lowest spacer’s apprentice to the XO. The very best. I need you all working hard. To lead your departments. I can only command, only set an example from the bridge. You must lead the crew.”*But victory on both fronts are absolutely necessary so as usual …come what may! This has been a great story line with great characters and I have to wait another year for the next installment!**

**90.  IRON MAN: War for Libertine (Starship Jericho Universe Book 1), by Toby Neighbors (2025). I am sooo impressed with this book. His writing and character development never fails. Hugo was NOT a character I liked much in the original series, while on the starship *Jericho* or the renewed starship *Renegade*… but this “new” Hugo is a real hero though he is also a work in progress. Of course, it doesn’t help that those he cares about leave him…by choice or by death…and yet it doesn’t deter his loyalty and service. Eldora was a solid character as a leader of aliens who at first saw Hugo and Rip as dangerous but it seems the bombardment by the Ashi has dealt a death blow to all the inhabitants of Libertine except Hugo. A human, Zaya, is encountered from a slave ship…she had been abducted from earth years before and her a Rip end up leaving Libertine.  I miss “Rip” for comic relief… but if he doesn’t come back a Cassian side kick might be fun. The next book comes out sometime this month so I am looking forward to seeing how Hugo survives the interesting changes that are occurring on Libertine.**

**91.  ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST: And other Atonement Writings, translated and edited by Michael F. Lynch. (2024) Ever wonder where the doctrine of the sufficiency of the death of Christ and its efficiency comes from? Well, why it did not originate with John Davenant, a member of the English delegation to the Synod of Dordt. His contemporaries spared with him over this sufficiency and efficiency debate. Contemporaries like John Owen, Bishop Ussher and Richard Baxter all need to be read to get a historical/theological understanding of this theory of the atonement. Is Christ’s death sufficient that all COULD be saved? That is a question that has plagued discussions for theologians for centuries. While that has enabled hours of debate, discussion and argument…I am persuaded that the greater argument and the one that each of these men held to is the efficiency of Christ’s atonement. Particular or Limited atonement is articulated better than any contemporary treatise...making this a must read. This book gives us a look historically at how debates were also handle between members of the Reformed community and those outside with responses and letter to individuals supporting his position.**

**92.  A CHRISTIAN’S DUTY AND SAFETY IN EVIL TIMES, by Christopher Love (published in 1653, 2 years after his execution by his executioners. Digitally 2025) Love was known as a fiery and practical Puritan preacher it is probably why his life was cut short…since people like him got noticed by those that others didn’t want to be noticed by. But he was bold for the faith.  In his letters to his wife from the Tower of London just before his death there is not even a hint of the fear of death for he is certain of where he was going and he wanted his wife to be as certain of her eternal salvation. He took great strength from Stephen, *“But what made Stephen die thus quietly? Read the 55th ver., and you shall see the reason of it: Being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Behold (saith he) I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. This made him die with such a sweet, quiet, and calm temper; he saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive his Soul, and that made him die with such an extraordinary quietness of mind.”* I am not sure that there are many like these men around today. These are his last sermons while he was incarcerated just before his execution. There are 4 in all: Christ’s Prayer for the saints Support from John 17:15 (a quip of insight in this sermon, *“If Jesus Christ prays to his Father to keep us from the Evils of the world, then hence learn, That every man by nature is unable to keep himself from the Evil of the world: The Devil is a strong man armed, Luk. 11:21, and thou art an unarmed poor creature. who should not be the subject matter of his prayer, I pray not for the world. Ver. 9. This is a good argument against those that plead for universal Redemption: If Jesus Christ would not spend his breath to pray for them, then surely he would not spend his precious blood to purchase heaven for them.”*; A Divine Balance to weigh All Doctrines from I Thess. 5:21(a quote from this sermon gives you the flavor, *“A man would think it unnecessary to treat against the popish Doctrine, but Ministers never had more reason for it, then now: for there never was more likelihood of popery its spreading then in these days, wherein under the notion of a cursed* Tolerance. *Now this being so, I shall in the next place give some Demonstrations that we are in danger to have the kingdom of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ removed from us, therefore let us not be secure, for there is great danger the Gospel shall be removed, if not from the Nation, yet from particular places.”*; A Christian’s Great Enquiry from Acts 16:30-31, and A Description of True Blessedness from Luke 11:28. He was looking death in the face and it wasn’t his death that bothered him but the surety of his Christian brothers and sister in evil times. I may try to take one of these for my Reformation Day sermon.**

**93.  PATIENCE AND ITS PERFECT WORK: Eduring sudden and Sore Trials with Joy, by Thomas Goodwin (originally published in 1667, digitized by Monergism 2019) This is an exposition of James 1:1-5-*“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.  And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”*Patience… what a thing to preach on…because to seek patience is to KNOW that trials will come that are meant to prepare you to be patient. Our Father is long-suffering and as he reminds us, this is a characteristic that we can have but only by working out our salvation with fear and trembling before the God of the universe under the power of the Holy Spirit. For he makes it clear, *“This is a Christian virtue, revealing patience not just as endurance but a divine grace.”*He establishes for his readers the theological foundation of patience, exploring its origins in God’s character and its manifestations from Jesus. He states, *“Why does the Apostle mention “those who love Him” while speaking of those who endure temptation, unless it is because love enables one to endure temptation? Thus, it is faith in the first place, and then faith working through love in the second place, that produces patience or endurance.”*He also defines patience from the Greek to mean, *“The Greek word ὑπομονή, translated “patience,” signifies a remaining under pressure, enduring beneath a burden without breaking—whatever the burden may be. It primarily applies to sufferings for Christ. Patience is a steadfast, thankful, joyful endurance—persevering to the end of one’s life through all trials, however grievous, however great, however long, however devoid of visible hope for relief. It mortifies and subdues the disorder of opposing passions—such as fear, sorrow, worry, and anxiety—which naturally rise in times of affliction.”* He goes so far as to connect patience with God’s redemptive plan as nothing God does is “quick” from our perspective thus cultivating spiritual maturity resulting in more patience.  He speaks of the necessity of patience in the believers with simple words of encouragement and grace, *“faith sets heaven before us as the reward for patient endurance. James 1:12 declares, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*These men of old preach and teach as if there is no tomorrow on one hand and on the other remind their audience even us hundreds of years later that while we are here we are to be living as God describes in the Bible for it is in this habit that we will have joy and peace and be able in patience to be a blessing to those around us. He ends with this, *“Take heart, then, and find comfort especially in this: as your trials abound, so this glorious power of God shall abound also toward you, to sustain you. Amen.”***

**94.  OTHER ELECT: A Reformed Theology of Salvation Amongst the Unevangelized, by Jeremiah Dahl (2025 BY Westminster Books). An interesting book that purports to prove out of hand the doctrine of Reformed inclusivism.  *“This is the crux of Reformed inclusivism: God will redeem all who repent and trust in Him, in accordance with the light given. What is necessary for God to be merciful is the work of Christ. The work of Christ provides the ground on which any can be saved. The work of the Spirit utilizing God’s vocatio realis provides the means through which they are saved, the Spirit illuminating their mind and enlightening their conscience and renewing their heart to accept the revelation of God which has been placed before them, such that they will turn to call upon Him. “In the Reformed faith it is the Father who ordains salvation, the Son who merits it, and the Holy Spirit who applies it. The Holy Spirit applies it by regenerating our heart to accept the truth presented to us. All revelation is fruitless sans the work of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who makes the difference, and the Spirit blows where He wishes.”*His thesis is almost as old as other Reformed/biblical doctrines, namely, while God normally brings salvation in Christ through the revelation of his word through the Spirit…the Spirit can use “other means” that fall within his purview if the Word is not available since as you see it is not the Word that saves but Christ according to this view. I first came upon this possibility while I was at Bible College. Many of the Dutch Reformers spent, it seems, an inordinate amount of time on this since there seemed to be instances where people were coming to Christ without the revelation of God being present. R.C. Sproul talks about this as well. He begins by saying there are no “innocent native” in the jungles of the deepest darkest of Africa…all have sinned and have fallen short, BUT even as the WCF seems to allow God’s elect will be saved whether with the Word or without. Normally it is with the word but there are exceptions. This book could have been about 300 pages shorter to be sure but he uses of over 1000 quotes to seek to substantiate this position that I am not sure is to highly argued against any more. But many of the quotes are excellent quotes even if some of them are taken out of context for other things. *“It is important to note here that ‘repentance is our response to grace, not a condition of grace.’(James Torrance) Repentance does not earn forgiveness. As Augustine put it, ‘He who confesses and condemns his sins, already acts with God. God condemns thy sins: if thou dost condemn them, thou art linked on to God.’ So also Spurgeon ‘do not regard your repentance as the cause of your remission, but as the companion of it. Repentance is also not mere morality.”* This book is overdone to be sure…by the time I finished it I was hoping it would be over soon.**