TOWARD THE MARK

"I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS."
PHILIPPIANS 3:14

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Dear Friends,

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The true character of faith is to depend upon God—not only in the face of difficulty, but even in the face of impossibility. Faith does not rest upon human resources or favorable circumstances; it rests upon the promises of God. To the natural mind, such confidence may sometimes appear imprudent. Yet faith is not carelessness, nor does it reject the wise use of the means God provides. Rather, it refuses to place its confidence in those means instead of in God. When human ability reaches its limit, God's power is most clearly revealed. What is impossible with man is possible with God. Faith, therefore, looks beyond visible circumstances and waits upon the One who accomplishes all things according to His will.

True faith is concerned first with the will of God. It does not allow human limitations, outward appearances, or the reasoning of flesh and blood to have the final word. Once assured of God's will, faith trusts His wisdom, His timing, and His way of fulfilling His purpose.

When faith grows weak, we are tempted to calculate every human resource before taking a step. We begin to ask whether the circumstances are favorable and whether success appears likely.

But strong faith begins with a different question: "What has God said?" This does not mean that faith neglects wisdom or preparation. It means that neither wisdom, preparation, nor human ability can take the place of dependence upon God. The means may be useful, but the power belongs to Him.

Let us remember, when something appears achievable by human strength alone, we may easily forget our need for the energy of the Holy Spirit. But the work of God must always be accomplished in dependence upon God. Faith looks beyond what man can do and rests confidently in what God has promised to do.

Therefore, do not lose heart when the way seems difficult or even impossible. The God who calls you is faithful, and He will accomplish His purpose in His own time. Keep trusting, keep praying, and keep moving forward in obedience.

Faith may not always see the path ahead, but it knows the One who leads the way—and He will never fail.

Thank you for the encouraging e-mails that we often receive. It is our prayer that the Lord will use *Toward the Mark* to help you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him. We would like you to visit our website for the previous articles. Please keep praying for the Lord's blessing on *Toward the Mark*.

Yours in our soon-coming Lord,

Emil S. Nashed

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TOWARD THE MARK

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Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or the J.N. Darby translation.

MILK

"The truth shall make you free"

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SERVANT, MASTER, OR IDOL?

A Christian Reflection on AI

When the Machine Begins to Speak

A machine can now write a poem, compose music, answer a theological question, and imitate the voice of someone we love. It can produce, in a matter of seconds, words that might take a person hours to write. The experience can be astonishing…and unsettling.

As we watch a computer respond almost as though it understands us, difficult questions arise. Is there something truly human behind those words? Could a machine ever possess a soul? Will artificial intelligence (AI) become a faithful servant of humanity, or will we gradually become its servants?

For Christians, these are not merely technical questions. They touch something deep within us: our understanding of what it means to be human, why God created us, and where our hope is found.

The Bible does not mention AI, but it speaks clearly about creation, human dignity, wisdom, truth, work, and worship. These truths can help us walk through this unfamiliar territory without fear and without being deceived by the brilliance of our own inventions.

More Than Intelligence

When God created Adam, He did not simply create an intelligent organism. Scripture tells us that God formed man from the dust of the ground and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

That picture is deeply personal. Humanity is not the accidental result of a mechanical process; on the contrary, we are the intentional creation of a personal God. Scripture also declares: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Genesis 1:27).

This is where human dignity begins.

A machine may calculate more quickly than we can. It can access more information than we could ever learn. It may arrange words so beautifully that they move us. But speed, memory, and verbal ability are not what make us precious. **Our value comes from God.**

AI can produce words about sorrow, but it has never stood beside the grave of someone it loves. It can describe joy, but it has never held a newborn child. It can generate a prayer, but it does not lift its heart to heaven. It can explain the gospel, but it has never known the conviction of sin, the wonder of forgiveness, or the peace of Christ.

A machine may imitate the expressions of the human soul, but imitation is not possession.

This distinction matters. If intelligence or productivity determines value, then those who are less capable—the elderly, the unborn, the sick, and people with disabilities—may be treated as less worthy. The gospel tells us otherwise. Every human life has immeasurable worth because every person bears the mark of the Creator.

A Gift and a Responsibility

Christians do not need to regard every new technology as an enemy. Human creativity is itself a gift from God.

He placed Adam in the garden "to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Since then, men and women have used the resources of creation to make tools, develop medicine, build communities, and communicate across great distances.

The printing press once transformed the way people encountered the written Word of God. Modern transportation carried missionaries farther than previous generations could have imagined. Radio, television, and the internet have all been used to proclaim the gospel.

Artificial intelligence may also be used for good. It can help doctors identify disease, give a voice to someone who cannot speak, translate Christian materials into another language, assist students in learning, and free workers from exhausting repetitive tasks. Used with wisdom, it can become a valuable servant.

But every gift brings responsibility. The same technology that helps a doctor can invade a patient's privacy. The same system that translates the gospel can manufacture convincing lies. The same tool that improves productivity can leave workers feeling disposable and forgotten.

The question is not simply, "What can AI do?" The deeper question is, "What kind of people will we become as we use it?"

The Human Cost of Convenience

Convenience has a quiet way of shaping the heart. At first, we use a tool because it saves time. Then we begin to depend upon it. Eventually, we may discover that we have surrendered something we never intended to lose.

If AI writes every message for us, will our own voices grow weaker? If it answers every difficult question, will we lose the patience to think? If it constantly entertains us, will silence become unbearable? If people turn to artificial companions instead of human relationships, will loneliness deepen beneath the appearance of connection?

There are moments when a person does not need a perfect answer. He needs someone to sit beside him. A grieving widow may receive comforting words from a computer, but she still needs the touch of a caring hand. A troubled young person may ask an AI system for guidance, but he still needs parents, teachers, pastors, and friends who know his name and love his soul. A believer may use technology to search the Scriptures, but no program can replace communion with God in prayer or fellowship with Him.

God did not create us merely to exchange information. He created us for relationship with Himself and with one another.

A People of Truth

AI can produce false information with extraordinary confidence.

It can create realistic photographs of events that never occurred, reproduce a person's voice, and generate videos that make innocent people appear guilty. In such a world, truth becomes even more precious. Scripture commands us to put away lying and "speak every man truth with his neighbor" (Ephesians 4:25).

Christians must never use AI to deceive, impersonate, plagiarize, or manipulate. We must also resist the temptation to share sensational information before determining whether it is true.

A polished answer is not necessarily an accurate one. A convincing image is not necessarily real. Technology can assist our judgment, but it cannot relieve us of the responsibility to exercise it.

This is especially important in Christian ministry. AI may help organize notes, improve grammar, or locate useful information. Yet a sermon cannot simply be manufactured. Ministry must flow from a heart that has been in the presence of God. The shepherd must know both the Scriptures and the sheep.

Spiritual truth is not merely information to be assembled. It is truth to be believed, lived, and proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When a Tool Becomes an Idol

Perhaps the greatest danger is not that AI will become human. It is that human beings will begin to treat AI as divine.

We may be tempted to trust it as though it knows everything. We may allow its recommendations to guide our choices without question. We may imagine that enough information, enough computing power, and enough technological progress will eventually solve the deepest problems of humanity.

But the human heart does not need an upgrade. It needs redemption.

Our greatest problem is not insufficient knowledge; it is sin.

Our greatest need is not a more powerful machine; it is reconciliation with God.

AI cannot forgive our sins. It cannot give peace to a guilty conscience. It cannot conquer death or offer eternal life. These gifts come through Jesus Christ alone.

“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Technology becomes an idol when we ask it to give us what only God can provide: identity, meaning, wisdom, security, and hope.

Walking Forward Without Fear

It is natural to feel uncertain when the world changes so quickly. Yet Christians need not face the future with fear. Machines may become more capable, but God has not become less sovereign. No invention can overthrow His throne, frustrate His purposes, or separate His children from His love.

Our calling is to walk wisely.

Before using AI, we might pause and ask:

- Is this truthful?
- Does it honor the dignity of the people involved?
- Am I using it to serve others or merely to avoid responsibility?
- Is it strengthening my God-given abilities or slowly replacing them?
- Does it deepen human relationships or make them less necessary?
- Can I use it with a clear conscience before the Lord?

Scripture gives us a fitting principle: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Artificial intelligence may become one of the most powerful tools our generation has ever known. We may receive what is good in it with gratitude. We must resist what encourages deception, injustice, isolation, and pride. And we must remember that no machine, however remarkable, can carry the weight of our worship.

AI may help us find words, but only God speaks the Word of Life. It may imitate understanding, but "the Lord giveth wisdom" (Proverbs 2:6). It may offer information, but Christ alone can say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Let the machine remain a servant. Let mankind remember its Creator. And let our hope remain where it has always belonged—in the living God, in Christ who is our hope.

Emil S. Nashed

MEAT

"Sanctify them by the truth"

PRIESTLY SERVICE

Both Eleazer and Ithamar, the two sons of Aaron, had a share in the service of the Tabernacle, and in type their service portrays the priesthood of believers today in the House of God

Eleazer is mentioned in the book of Numbers over thirty times, and in chapter 4 his particular function in the Tabernacle service is clearly outlined:

> And Eleazer, the son of Aaron the priest, shall have the oversight of the oil for the light, and the fragrant incense, and the continual oblation, and the anointing oil, the oversight of the whole Tabernacle, and of all that is therein, over the sanctuary and over its furniture (verse 16).

It is clear that he was responsible to see that all the daily needs of the Tabernacle service were supplied: oil, incense, and so on. These would need to be at hand every day to keep the system in function. Upon Aaron devolved the task of dressing the seven lamps on the lampstand and lighting those lamps every evening. When he went in the morning to dress the lamps, and again in the evening to light them, he put incense on the golden altar. **Here we have a beautiful picture of the priestly service of our Lord. We are under His care today, so that He may order our circumstances and grant us the supply of His Spirit, that during the darkness obtaining in this world, we may "shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). Along with this dressing and lighting, Aaron burned the fragrant incense which again reminds us of the priestly intercession of our Lord who "ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).**

Now, as we read in Numbers 4:16**, Eleazar was responsible to see that these requirements were in supply: the oil for the light; the incense for the golden altar and the daily oblation, which also burned on the altar of burnt offering, all the time Aaron was in the Tabernacle,** both morning and evening. These three things were all in function together. The savor of the evening oblation, the fragrant

incense on the golden altar ascending, and the light shining: one in the court, and the other two in the holy place. These things typify for us the daily service of the House of God and the daily need connected with that service, if we are to be found today in the exercise of our holy priesthood in association with our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Priest over the House of God.

Ithamar was responsible for the building itself, as we may gather in the following verse:

> These are the things numbered of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, which were counted, according to the commandment of Moses, by the service of the Levites, under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest (Exodus 38:21).

So in this chapter in Numbers we find him mentioned twice, in verses 28 and 33. Gershon and Marari came under his hand, that portion of the Levites who carried the curtains, the boards of the tabernacle, and the pillars of the court. In this way both Eleazar and Ithamar exercised their priesthood as we read in 1 Chronicles 24:2, "and Eleazar and Ithamar exercised the priesthood."

This brings to light another point of interest in this chapter. It seems that in the exercise of his priesthood, Eleazar was associated in the work of the Kohathites when the tabernacle was in transit, while Ithamar was associated with both Gershon and Marari. Kohath had the honor of carrying the holy vessels which speak of the personal, moral, and official glories of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Gershon fell the lot of carrying the curtains, the tabernacle, and the tent, which composed the house in which these vessels—which speak of Christ—stood in their respective places before God. Then to Marari fell the lot of carrying the boards of the tabernacle and the pillars of the court, that which gave support to the curtains of the tabernacle and the hangings of the court. This speaks of what is practical, for the boards and the bars, the pillars, the pegs, and the cords, were calculated to give stability to the tabernacle and the court hangings. For us this would indicate the maintenance of practical righteousness towards the world. In carrying all these vessels and materials, Kohath came under the hand of Eleazar, and Gershon and Marari under the hand of Ithamar.

Now this association of Levitical and priestly service is clearly outlined for us in Numbers 8. There we read that the Levites were given ("gifted" according to Young's Concordance) to Aaron and to his sons to do the service of the tabernacle. Does this not indicate that all true Levitical service has in view the supporting of priestly service in the presence of God? This is the real end in view of all true ministry, that worship to our God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ may be the result obtained.

Now in attempting to give the New Testament answer to these things, we have thought that the service of Marari suggests what we may call a practical ministry; the service of Gershon a doctrinal ministry; both under the hand of Ithamar. But the service of Kohath under the hand of Eleazar suggests a devotional ministry concerning the greatness and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then all would come under the hand of Aaron as the High Priest upon whose shoulders lay the responsibility to see that all was done according to the mind of God as given through Moses.

If we think then of Aaron as setting forth Christ in the presence of God today, we see in Eleazer and Ithamar his sons, the priesthood of believers who are fitted to be in association with Him and to share, under His control and guidance, in the holy and royal priesthood. So we read in the type, "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him" (Exodus 28:1).

So today we have been called to share in the priestly service of God's spiritual system. This necessitates true priestly conditions in sanctification; and allied with this, a ministry of all truth to instruct us in the knowledge of God. Answering to the service of Eleazer, we should see that all that is needed in a spiritual way is supplied and maintained. Like Ithamar, who was more concerned with the building, whether being carried or erected, we should see the need of rightly assembling together for the service of God, meeting according to Scripture, so that the service may go on.

If then a devotional ministry, a doctrinal ministry, and a practical ministry are maintained, right conditions will be produced in which our priestly service will go on for the present pleasure of God. It will lead us into conscious association with our Lord and

into holy liberty in the presence of God inside the veil, where we can give to our God the praise and worship of our souls. For this we have the indwelling Spirit, and thus the heavenly system may be in activity today, the grand answer to all these types.

This is but a suggestion as to these typical matters, but may this slight consideration of one of the beautiful types of Scripture lead us into a greater appreciation of our heavenly calling, and the privilege we have today of answering to it for the pleasure of our God and Father.

G. Davison

THE RENT VEIL

The rending of the veil marked four things:

(1) That Judaism of the past was over;
(2) That man had consummated his guilt;
(3) That God had disclosed Himself in perfect grace;
(4) And that the sins of the believer were swept away by the same stroke forever.

The veil being rent, I see the holiness of God; but the very stroke that rent the veil, and thus unveiled the holiness of God, has put away the sin that hindered me from standing in the presence of that holiness; God coming out to me, and I enabled to go with Christ into the rest of His holiness. The more the eye of God scrutinizes and searches us, the more it brings out the blessed truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. The light shews the whiteness of the robe that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

JN Darby

EXERCISE

"Exercise thyself unto piety"

PAUL'S DOCTRINE AND SALT!

Have we then Paul's doctrine? We may boast, as all do, that we have the scriptures — surely it is well. We may have confidence that an ever faithful Lord will never leave or forsake His people, and that He knows them that are His, and will keep them unto the end. But can we say that we have Paul's doctrine of the Church—the body of Christ on earth formed by the presence and baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Having it, can we say that we are as living members, acting upon the truth of it through the never-failing supply of grace He gives? Or, do we come under the character of those who are described as "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth?"—Those whose mind and intellect the truth has reached, but without faith, and hence without practical value in our lives?

Of the truth, we can say as of faith: "What profit, my brethren, if a man say he have the truth?" if he have not shown that he has faith in it; and thus has learned to act upon it as something in which he believes? It is always a sign that a man has faith in the truth which he knows, when it has had its corresponding effect upon his life—when it has been acted upon in practice. No man has ever had the joy and power of a divine truth till he has accepted it, and walked therein.

Many are thus ever learning and never able to come to a divinely confirmed knowledge of it, because the practice is wanting. It is learned in the intellect; the natural mind is touched perhaps with the beauty and divine excellence of it; it cannot be denied, but there is no faith in it. It has not been learned in the conscience and in the soul; and when tribulation or persecution arises because of it, he is offended—deems it non-essential perhaps—and surrenders that to which he has never come to a divinely given knowledge.

If ever there was a day when there was such a thing as "salt which had lost its savor," it is the present. The most touching—the very highest—truths of God have become the topics of the world's conversation. They

are held by many after a fashion, in which the edge and power of them are lost. **A worldly walk and conversation are coupled with the intellectual knowledge of the highest truths of God; and like salt that has lost its saltness, one can but ask of it, "Wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but (even) men cast it out" (Luke 14:34–35).**

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:10–14).

May the Lord open the understanding of His beloved people, that in the midst of the confusion and corruption of such in evil day—when men are saying, "What is truth?" and yet not caring for the reply, they may find that there are such principles in the word of God as no amount of man's failure can ever touch, and which are ever practicable to those who desire humbly to walk with God, and to keep the word of the patience of Jesus, till He comes.

F.G. Patterson

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Who ran to meet Abraham's servant at the well?
2. Which king in the Old Testament had 60 daughters?
3. Where was the Lord Jesus when he healed the son of the noble man of Capernaum?

REST

"Shall I not seek rest for thee that it may be well with thee?"

REST AT NOON!

"Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?" (Song of Solomon 1:7).

"Rest at noon"! How inviting it sounds! To understand this song, we must picture ourselves in Eastern lands. It is noon, and the rays of the scorching sun are beating upon the parched and wearied earth. There is no escape from its pitiless glare. **But there is One who is skillful in finding rest even at noon for His flock; He is addressed as the One "whom my soul loveth."**

Dear troubled, anxious Christian, has it been noon with you? Have the scorching rays of tribulation, trial, weakness of body, or of shattered hopes and a broken spirit reached you, till you have felt you could bear no more? What you need is REST.

There is One, the same whom your soul loves, who can give the rest you need. He loves you well, and it is He who has permitted the tribulation, the weakness of body, the broken spirit in order that, parched and weary, you might at length turn to Him and find "rest at noon." Even at noon there is a place of perfect peace. What a rest it is!

To lie perfectly passive in His hands, knowing that the love, the perfect divine love which has planned out your pathway, has measured the weight of your sorrow. He is engaged in working out the purposes of His love in you for His own glory first, and then for your exceeding gain. In the knowledge of that love your heart may rest—"rest at noon."

I knew a Christian who was dying. One would have thought that he could not stand any greater pressure and further weakening, but the fiercer the trial, the more beautiful was the rest that he enjoyed.

There is no possible combination of circumstances in which this rest may not be known.

"A Man shall be…as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isaiah 32:2). "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The same truth is put in different ways. In all our weariness we know Him who knew weariness and thirst. He who was "God over all, blessed forever," yet truly Man, is now glorified, the succorer of His people and their great High Priest, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Surely we can find rest in Him, as under "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He gives the invitation: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Every weary sinner who comes to Him will find rest. Blessed Jesus! The One whom our souls love is the same who can give rest to His flock at noon.

"Rest at Noon"! Do you know anything of it?

Unknown Author

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURE SEARCH

1. Laban (Genesis 24:29)
2. Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:21)
3. Cana (John 4:46–54)

THE HOPE!

"Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh."
Luke 21:28.

There is a world beyond this world of sight,
No eye has seen, nor heart of man conceived,
For those who in Saviour have believed:

A home of everlasting love and light;
A day of joy, that ends the long dark night;
A rich reward, for those who suffered loss;
The Lord's "Well done," for those who bore their cross;
The victor's crown for those who fought the fight.
Then art thou faint and weary by the way?

Lift up thy head, and hear the Master say,
"I am the Morning Star, the hope of dawn,
I quickly come, to call on high My own,
From shades of night, into the cloudless morn,
To see Me face to face, and know as known."

Hamilton Smith.

Who are you following?

Following has never been easier. With one tap, we can follow a person, a trend, an opinion, or a movement. When thousands—or millions—of people are heading in the same direction, it is natural to assume they must be right.

But is the crowd always right?

It takes no courage to drift with the current. A lifeless fish floats downstream; a living fish can swim against it.

Years ago, a shepherd was guiding his flock along a country road. As the sheep approached a bridge over a rocky ravine, something suddenly frightened them. One sheep panicked, jumped over the railing, and fell onto the rocks below. Then another sheep followed. And another. Within moments, nearly the entire flock had made the same fatal leap. Each sheep simply followed the one ahead of it, as if something must be safe because others were doing it. The Bible warns us: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exodus 23:2). A crowd can make something popular, but it cannot make something right.

Today, many people live as if God does not matter—as if there were no soul to save, no sins to answer for, and no eternity ahead. They pursue pleasure, success, possessions, and approval while giving little thought to the One who gave them life.

Perhaps you have been following the same path simply because everyone around you seems to be doing so. But "everyone is doing it" will never be an answer to God. If you shut God out of your life, ignore what He says about sin, or treat Jesus Christ as merely a figure from history, you are following a path that leads away from God. Even if millions travel that road, their numbers cannot change its destination. The Lord Jesus said: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there" (Matthew 7:13).

Thankfully, not everyone follows the crowd. All over the world, people are turning to Jesus Christ, believing the gospel, and receiving forgiveness and eternal life. The most important question is not, "What is everyone else doing?" rather, "Where will you spend eternity?" You were created by God, and your life has eternal value. Yet the Bible says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of His glory. We cannot erase our guilt or save ourselves through good deeds, religion, or sincere intentions. **That is why the Lord Jesus Christ came. He took the sinner's place upon the cross and bore the judgment that our sins deserved. He died, was buried, and rose again so that everyone who trusts in Him may be forgiven and receive eternal life. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5–6). There is one God against whom we have sinned, and there is one Mediator who gave Himself to save us.**

Do not simply follow the crowd. Turn to Christ and admit your need, believe what He accomplished for you upon the cross, and trust Him as your Savior.

"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

The crowd cannot save you. Religion cannot save you. Your good works cannot save you. But the Lord Jesus Christ can—and He will save everyone who comes to Him in faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Who are you following—and where is that path leading you?