

# Layers of Living Faith

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 August 2018

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[ 0 : 00 ] In 2 Peter chapter 1, we read from verse 5, Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar often hath forgotten, that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and the election sure. But if ye do these things, ye shall never fail. Never fail. So, what we have here, there's two main points that we need to recognize in these verses.

First of all, the one that might cross our minds is, well, how can we do these things? How can we make such things happen? How can I add to my faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and so on?

Surely, it is all of God. Surely, it is all of God's great grace that I am saved at all, and that I have any knowledge of Christ at all. How can I do these things?

[ 1 : 16 ] How can I add at all to these things? Well, obviously, we cannot add to the work of God in terms of redemption. Our salvation is all of grace. Faith itself is the gift of God.

Remember what Ephesians 2, verse 8 says, For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not in yourselves, it is the gift of God. Faith is that which the Lord gives, and without faith, it is impossible to please him.

For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, as Hebrews tells us, and he's a word of them that diligently seek him. So we wouldn't have that faith at all. We wouldn't have that salvation at all if it wasn't for the direct intervention of God's grace.

But the Lord has not left us like stones or like, you know, mannequins in a shop window. We are not just sort of lifeless creatures. We are organic living beings.

We are human beings made in the image of God, and therefore it is anticipated, it is expected of us, that if we are alive, we must grow in the things in which we are alive.

[ 2 : 27 ] You know, our faith is not to be a dead faith. As Galatians tells us, you know, chapter 5, verse 6, in Jesus Christ. Now the circumcision availeth anything, but uncircumcision, the outward things are less important, but faith which worketh by love.

It's not a static thing. Remember once, many years ago, I did a children's address with children with plastic food, you know, like a wee pretend sort of cooker. I need a plastic fried egg and a plastic sort of thing of peas and a plastic hamburger and so on.

And they were able to pick these up and look at them and describe the kinds of food and so on. Now, I don't want to eat it, because although it might look brilliant, and I might take it out and I might pretend up and say, look, here's my hamburger, here's my fried egg and my peas and so on, they might have a wee smile and they might say, oh, well, we can tell it's toy food, we can tell it's pretend.

That's how it came out looking so good, because it's not real. You can do it once, you can do it ten times, you can do it twenty times, and it will look exactly the same, because it's not real.

You can't eat it. It doesn't change. The fried egg isn't hot and bubbly. The hamburger isn't tasty. It's just plastic. It's dead.

[ 3 : 38 ] And sometimes we can treat of our faith and that. We say, oh, well, that's me. I'm sorted. Yes, I've made my profession. That's me in the kingdom of heaven now. I can do whatever I like. I can just stay at the same level.

Most of you will know that my wife and I have recently become grandparents. We had the joy of seeing our grandson just the other way. And at that point, he was two weeks old.

Now, because he's two weeks old, he's tiny. And he's little, and he's comparatively weak, and he can't do anything for himself. And maybe when he's two years old, he'll still need a lot of help.

But if we went back to see him at two years old, and he was still the same size, and at the same stage as when he was two weeks old, then there would be serious medical problems.

There would be real, but we'd be really worried. His parents would be worried. Everybody would be worried. The doctors and nurses in the hospital would be worried. Because he shouldn't be at the same size after two years as he is after two weeks.

[ 4 : 35 ] And likewise, our faith should not be at the same stage, you know, two years later or 20 years later as it was when we were just converted. It should be growing.

It should be working. And we are meant to cooperate in the work of God in that sense. This is the first thing we need to recognize, that there is a role for us in this, that we are to work at that which the Lord has given us.

In chapter 2 of Philippians, we read verse 12, Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Well, how can it be both and? We are to work as faithful servants.

But God, who is the master, he is the one who has done the deed. It's like if somebody were to give you a piece of your own land. They were to give you your own land. Say, here's a chunk, so many acres of your own land.

[ 5 : 46 ] And I'm giving it to you now. You own it. And you might say, well, that's fine, thanks very much. And they come back in five years. And there it still is. And it's completely, you know, more unworked stage. They might as well have given it to somebody else.

But if, having received the land, you say, right now we're going to dig it. We're going to burn off the hill. We're going to build a dike around it. We're going to plough. We're going to grow crops and a good beast. And then fence off this wee bit and make it fruitful.

And they'll come back and say, oh, what a wonderful job. I'm so glad I gave you that piece of land because you worked it so well. The Lord gives us the gift of faith. But like the sermons in the parables of the talents and the pines, we're expected to put it to work.

Add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge temperance. Like the rings in the tree, it is expected to grow. It is expected to expand.

This is the thing. It is the work of God. But we are to work at it. And it is something which we can't just do, you know, we can't just do sitting on our hands.

[ 6 : 51 ] We have to use that which the Lord gives us. And this will take everything that we have. This is the second point that we need to recognize here. Now, this is not something that will happen by magic.

To an extent, it will happen just like our physical growth. The more we go on with the Lord, if we're applying ourselves to serving the Lord, to worship, to his word, and to a prayer life and so on, then, yes, we will gradually grow and imbibe and absorb more and more knowledge and understanding of the Lord Jesus and his work and our growth in faith.

It will happen if we're doing that. It won't happen by our old nature. To give you an example, in my last job that I wasn't particularly good at and I thought I knew nothing about, when I was working there for the two and a half, three years that I was there, somebody once, when I was at home with visitors or friends of my parents, and they said, and what do you do?

And I said, well, I'm a lab technician. I work with a mud-related, you know, drilling fluid-related company on Aberdeen. They said, oh, what do they do? And I began to explain to them about the work the company did and about what my task was in the lab and so on.

And as I was speaking, I thought, I never knew I knew so much about this job. You know, I hadn't realised I just gradually absorbed little by little by doing it, by doing the work and reading the stuff and having it explained and putting it into practice.

[ 8 : 16 ] I just gradually absorbed knowledge of the job. And I thought, I don't know anything about this job. But when somebody asks you stuff and you explain, you think, James, I actually know quite a bit about it. I didn't realise I knew so much about it.

Because you're just taking it in day by day. And if we are applying ourselves to our faith, just as if your body, if you do nothing with it for a year and a half, it's going to be dead in a few months.

Because you have to actually give it water. You have to actually give it food. You have to exercise your muscles a bit by getting up and moving about each day. If you simply lay down on the floor for six weeks and you didn't eat, you didn't drink water, you didn't move about, you didn't do anything, your body's going to die.

And you can't say, oh, but you said it would just happen naturally, it would just grow naturally. Yes, but you have to feed it. You have to exercise it. You have to put the food into it. You have to function normally. But if you're doing all that, then the body will grow.

It will gain strength. It will begin to develop. You will begin to breathe. Your lungs will work. Your muscles will work. Your body will be put to work. But it has to keep on being fed in the normal way.

[ 9 : 28 ] So likewise with our faith. It takes all that we have. At the opening of this letter here, Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, the word that is translated servant here is literally the word slave.

Now, this is something that Paul also uses in some of his letters when he describes himself as the servant of Jesus Christ. It's the word, the Greek word that means literally slave. Now, a slave differed from a servant in that a servant, on the one hand, he could, if he got fed up with the mass, say, okay, well, you don't have to pay me anymore.

I'm walking. I'm going. I'm going to find employment elsewhere. He could do that. A contract worker might have to finish out his contract, but a slave was owned, in a sense, body and soul by his master.

He had no time that was his own. If the master said jump, he had to say how high. If the master said, I want you to get up at midnight and go and do this task, he had to do it. He was owned completely.

Now, the plus side of that is that he belonged completely with the master. He was as close as family in that sense, but he was owned completely. He didn't have anything that was his own in the sense of any time that's his own, any possessions that are his own.

[ 10 : 41 ] He's owned completely. And that is the sense in which Peter says he belongs to Christ. And I think, oh, that's not a very good thing. Surely we want to be ourselves a bit. No, we will. But, you know, you have to look at it this way.

If the slave, let's say, hadn't been owned by his master and he had to fend for himself, he might have been starving to death in the gutter. He might have had no clothes anyway. He might be completely without shelter, but the master took him in and fed him and clothed him and looked after him.

And he took, as it were, legal possession of him in that sense. If he's a kindly good master, the slave is far better off with him than he is without him. But also there's the point here that, as Peter says, if he's the slave of Christ, he's owned completely, then for a Christian, there is never a compartmentalization of our lives.

There's never something which we're doing, whether it's going on holiday, whether it's doing our hobbies, whether it's doing our work, whether it's at home, whatever it is that we do. If we're a Christian, there's nothing that we are doing as a non-Christian.

There's never a time to say, well, that bit, that's me doing it as a Christian. But, you know, the rest of the time, you know, this is just me. This is just me time, you know. I can do this just for myself. I can behave how I want. I can think how I want.

[ 11 : 56 ] I don't have to think in Christian time. It's every part of your life. You read a book. You watch something on TV. You go out socializing somewhere. You're always doing it as a Christian. And everybody who sees you and knows you knows that you are a Christian, they will be, however subconsciously, watching you.

They'll be listening for what comes out of your mouth. They'll be conscious that you are a witness, whether you like it or not. There is no part of your life you can chop that off and say, that bit's not Christian.

That bit's just me. Because we are owned completely by the Lord. And so because we are owned completely by the Lord, everything we do, in a sense, is for him.

Everything that we live and breathe and do and operate, it is for him. He should have the best of our lives. He should have the best of our service. And so when the Lord gives us something, such as this precious gift of faith and redemption, we don't just like the unfaithful servants in the palace.

We don't just dig a wee hole and bury it in there. Say, well, that's it. There's your piece of land five years later. It's still rough moor. It's still swampy. It still hasn't been anything done. But yeah, you gave me. And there it is still.

[ 13 : 11 ] If you want it back again, you can have it. But the person has planted stuff in it. He's dug it. He's sown it. He's got in harvest for it. He's put beasts on it. He's got to plant trees. And he's fenced it around.

And he's drained it and so on. And a previous owner comes in. Oh, yeah, you've done a really good job on that. I'm so glad I came back. He's used it. And to see it being used is that which gives pleasure to the Lord.

Just as it gives pleasure to the master to see his five talents turned into ten. He's glad that he invested in that service. So likewise, when he gives us this gift of faith, when Peter then says, you know, you're giving all diligence.

Decide this giving all diligence. Add to your faith virtue. The word that is used for giving all diligence. It's a Greek word that refers to those who, in a spirit of public service, used to put on plays or whatever in the local theatres, in the pagan days of ancient Greece.

To put on local plays. But those plays would need a huge chorus line. And all the different voices that had to be in the choruses and the extras and so on. Somebody had to pay these people.

[ 14 : 21 ] Somebody had to maintain them and train them. And if somebody was a wealthy citizen and they chose to use all of their resources that were needed to fund it themselves so that there would be this public show that everyone could enjoy, then they were seen as a benefactor in that sense.

But it took a huge amount of effort. The Greek word that is used there later on came to mean equipping or funding or providing the necessary tools or equipment, whether for military or whether for agriculture or whether for business or work.

It meant giving the tools, giving the funding, giving the strength. All the power that was needed, all the abilities that were needed were provided. And this is the sense of it here.

Giving all diligence. It's going to take everything you want. Every effort and nerve must be bent to the task. Because this will not happen just by lying on the floor doing nothing.

Just as you will starve to death if you lie on the floor, never eat, never drink, never get up, never move about. You will die. So likewise your faith, if it is just left dormant lying on the floor, it will die.

[ 15 : 26 ] So you have to use every nerve and fibre and all diligence. Add to your faith. God has given you the gift of faith. Add to your faith virtue.

Now what do we understand by virtue? What we think of virtue is sort of goodness and sort of purity and so on. But the way the authorised version uses it, it's much more than that.

The translators are trying to put a Greek word, a Greek concept into an English word. And there's always something that is in a sense lost in translation. You could translate this word virtue as strength.

Remember how Jesus says, you know, that when the woman with the issue of blood is touching, virtue has gone out of me. Strength and power, I felt it draining away out of me. But add to your faith virtue.

Is the sense also of strength in the sense of courage? Virtue, strength, nobility. All the virtues are sort of piled into this one word.

[ 16 : 23 ] It's the highest sense of nobility here with this word that's translated virtue. There's two senses in which the old Greek word could be used.

One refers to the works of the gods that they believed in, the divine workings of the heavens, you know, which man can't affect. That kind of power, that kind of strength. The other way of understanding the word refers to a piece of ground that is very fertile.

In other words, it's bringing forth the harvest, bringing forth the fruits that it should. It's doing what it should. There's strength. There's power. There's operative, effectual excellence in it.

It's not just sort of a virtue in the abstract. It's effectual, working virtue. It's a nobility that is put into practice. It is effectively, as Galatians says, a faith that worketh by love.

An active, effectual virtue. This is what is to be added like another ring around the tree of your faith. But it doesn't end there. To virtue, knowledge.

[ 17 : 28 ] As your knowledge of the Lord increases, as with reading his word and with experiencing him in your life, day by day, and answered prayer, and so on. You'll never get answered prayer if you don't pray in the first place.

So, all these things, this ongoing relationship with the Lord, virtue, knowledge. But it's not just head knowledge, because the word that's translated here as knowledge, it's not just the sense of, oh, well, now I know these things.

I've got the head knowledge. I've got the intellectual ability. I can give a sense to these things. But rather, the sense is of practical knowledge. The ability to apply to particular situations the knowledge one has acquired.

It's like if you're trained in, let's say, a breakdown. Let's say you're an AA man or REC or something like that. And you're training all the works and mechanical stuff and breakdown.

You've got all the equipment. And somebody folds you up and says, oh, my car's broken down halfway up the cliche or whatever. And you go in your van. And then you look at it. And you see what the problem is. And you've had all your training.

[ 18 : 33 ] And you've got all your equipment. The kind of knowledge that is being talked about here is the ability to take what you have in your head and your tools and your equipment and to apply it.

It's like know-how, ability, knowledge to be applied there. The Christian is not just to know things in his or her head. He or she is to be able to take that and apply it to the situations of life.

It's not just simply about what would Jesus do sort of thing. But also, you know, there might be a complex situation. What is the best way for a Christian to act here?

What is the most that I can give, that I can do, that I can help with in this situation? What resources does the Lord give me? It's applying the knowledge. It's the know-how that is being applied here.

On a doctor, you know, that spends all these years at university cramming in their head knowledge of bodies and anatomy and how to heal and how to do surgery and so on. Somebody comes to them with a problem, they have to diagnose right away.

[ 19 : 34 ] And they diagnose from their knowledge. They apply that knowledge and they act accordingly. So this is the sense of knowledge here that is being used. It's practical wisdom and that it is being used to apply the knowledge that they have to the situation in hand.

And, you know, the Lord doesn't call us simply to shut ourselves in an ivory tower. We're called to act and to live out our faith in the everyday world. How can we be witnesses for him if we're not out there, you know, living amongst ordinary people who are not Christians?

And we are to be a salt and light in the midst of a dark and faceless world. This is what the Lord requires us. But in the midst of this all, we are likewise to have what the authorised version calls temperance.

Self-control is how other modern versions might put it. And that is likewise a good application of it. But it's not just self-control in terms of don't do this, don't do that, don't do the next thing.

It's not the, again, given that it's written in Greek, the Greek sense of the word is getting a grip of yourself. It's not just preventing yourself from doing things.

[ 20 : 45 ] It's rather harnessing the power or the passion or the energy that is there and using it for good. You know, if you've got wind blowing again or whatever, the rest of us might be just a towering wave trying to keep out of the wind.

And somebody else might look and see, there's an opportunity. If we stick up a propeller or stick up a turbine, we can harness that wind. We can make electricity or whatever. And we can utilise what is there.

So that when it's blowing strong, we get the good of it. But likewise, we can't make the wind blow. So at the same time, we've got this self-control, this knowledge, our passions, our energies, our desires, what have you.

They may be good things or they may be led in a way that's not good. But self-control is harnessing them. It's taking control of us so that these things become our servants rather than a tyrannical master.

Elijah was a man of like passions with us, the Bible says. But he prayed that it wouldn't rain for three and a half years and it didn't. And then he prayed again and it didn't rain. Elijah was a sinner just like we are.

[ 21 : 53 ] But he had the same kind of energies and passions and so on. And those were channeled into the service of the Lord. Temperance is not abstinence from everything.

It is rather the right use of God's good gifts, of the good things God gives. So if somebody has this self-control, it's not the emasculated absence of passion or strength or desires.

But it's rather they're being brought under control, being harnessed, becoming servants. It's self-mastery. The believer is not to be either a cold stone on the one hand, like the plastic fruit, you know, lifeless, soulless thing.

Nor are they to be in a situation where just logic and reason just controls everything like a sort of robot or computer. Nor at the other extreme are they to be like a dog on heat.

Or like a beast in the field, a brute beast that simply, you know, eats, drinks, defecates, procreates and that's all they do. A human being is made in the image of God. They are given, yes, bodily needs which the Lord meets.

[ 23 : 02 ] They are given passions, energies, loves, desires, strengths, which are not just to be let run rampant. They are to be harnessed. They are to be controlled.

They are to be used for the furtherance of the Lord's kingdom. Add to your knowledge temperance, this self-control, mastery of the self, so that that which is within can be rightly channeled, rightly used.

And to temperance, patience. And the word translated as patience implies to us just sort of meek kind of passivity. Just let it happen and don't respond in any way.

The sense in the original, again, it's more than just that kind of passive meekness. It's a sense of steadfastness, of endurance with a kind of tough, forward-looking strength here.

It's not mere passivity. It's not just accept it and endure it. There's always a sort of forward-looking element with this patience. Why are we enduring this?

[ 24 : 05 ] Why are we going through this? Because we're going to learn from it and it's going to become the next step on the ladder. An example that one of the commentators gives is in Hebrews 12, verses 2 and 3.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest he be weary and faint in your minds. You see, what the Lord endured, it was horrific what he endured on the cross.

But he looked through it and beyond it saying that through this suffering, he was purchasing for his own children a glory beyond their imagination.

And if we are able to see whatsoever comes our way by way of adversity or struggle or suffering or sorrow as a step on the ladder, another step on the journey and given for a purpose, for a reason that it may be used of the Lord, then it's not just a case of, well, we've just got to, you know, stiff up our lip and bear and patiently endure.

[ 25 : 18 ] It's not just about meekly and passively getting through it. It's about recognizing that this will have purpose. This will have meaning.

This is necessary in God's whole scheme of redemption. With the Lord, nothing is wasted and nothing is for nothing.

Every tear is bottled. Every sorrow has a purpose. Without the Lord, it's all just like pouring all these nutrients down the drain. You know, yes, you've still got them, but you're just pulling them away because you've got them, but they're no use to you.

So they're just going past you. Like water to a thirsty man and the rest is trickling through his fingers and he's not able to actually drink any. Well, the Lord gives everything for a purpose, for a reason.

And as we are unable to endure with patience, we are unable to recognize there will be purpose. Patience will always have purpose.

[ 26 : 17 ] We'll be looking through and beyond the adversity that comes, looking forward. There's a courage sense here. Patience. Patience. Patience. Accepting what comes as another forward step on the journey.

It's not just possibility. Patience. Add to this patience. Godliness. Well, we think we know what godliness is. Piety. Devotion. You know, practicing, living the presence of the Lord.

Yes, it means that we must be diligent about our prayer life. Yes, it means we must carve out the time to take with the Bible, with a little time for prayer.

Because without it, our prayer life, without it, our souls will begin to wither. They will begin to degenerate unless we make that. But it's not just about that. It's also about living completely in the presence of the Lord.

That everything we do, like Peter says at the beginning, the slaying of Jesus Christ, so that we are always the master's man or woman. Everything we do represents Christ.

[ 27 : 25 ] Everything we do, we do as a believer. We do this practice, this godliness, which has a two-fold emphasis. And what are the things that Jesus said were the two most important commandments of all?

One, you love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. That's the first thing, the vertical relationship. And the second is like it, he said, you love your neighbor as yourself, the horizontal relationship.

And every believer must have this two-fold focus. The Lord first, but then mankind second. And we have to have this godliness. This is what Jesus was like.

This is, if we are to be like him, we are to be like the Lord. His focus was on his Father, but also on those whom he came to see. This godliness is practicing the presence of the living God.

Brotherly kindness, we might think that's self-explanatory. The literal word is Philadelphia, as of course one of the churches in Revelation is called. Which means literally, philio, I love in the sense of friendship and brotherly kindness.

[ 28 : 29 ] Adelfos, my brother. So it's brotherly kindness, brotherly love. And obviously this is love of the brother. But if we don't love our fellow Christians, then who do we love?

You know, sometimes we do find it easier. You know, we've all encountered Christians who find it an awful lot easier to love the world outside. And to love those who aren't Christians, maybe with a view to converting, but get so irritated and frustrated and so, you know, negative towards their fellow brothers and sisters.

And, you know, that's getting things a wee bit slightly back to front. Because first of all, we must love those whom the Lord has redeemed. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. And we must add to this godliness, this practicing the presence of the Lord, our love for one another in Christ.

And that's not because we're all sinless and we're all easy to love. We all come with, like Elijah and like all the apostles and all the saints of old, we are men and women with like passions, sins, problems, imperfections, sins, like every family has.

And the family of the Lord's people is no different. But just as we are to love our family members, it's not that difficult to do. So likewise, we're to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

[ 29 : 47 ] It's this brotherly kindness, love for the brethren, recognizing that they are those whom the Lord has likewise redeemed. You know, when you're a wee, well, certainly it could be, when you're a wee.

When I was wee, I know that I would have been delighted if my mum or dad had taken my side against my sisters in an argument. I would want them to want me best.

I would want them to think I was always right and they were always wrong. And if they were picking on me, then they were wrong. And if I picked on them, well, I'm still okay. Because that's what I would want them to think. I would want them to think that I was the best out of all their three.

But of course, they wouldn't think that. They would love all their children the same. And although all their children wouldn't have the same characteristics, but likewise, they would love them all because they're all theirs.

And the Lord loves all of his children because they're all his. And if he loves them, and he has died for them, and he has redeemed them, who are we? They say, well, actually, I don't really like that one.

[ 30 : 43 ] And I can't stand that one. I'm good, of course, but I don't like them. We have to love those whom the Lord has redeemed. If they are his, they cannot be less than be ours.

But to brotherly kindness, charity. Now, this is the wider application of love. This is the term agape, the self-giving, self-emptying love.

This is the thing that Jesus asked Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Do you agape me? Do you have that self-emptying, complete, total, giving love?

And Peter was only able to say, Lord, you know that I am your friend. Although the English translates it just as love as well in both. It's a different Greek term. And Peter is using the filial term, you know, Philadelphia, brotherly of, you know that I am your friend, Lord.

And he asked him twice, do you love me? He said, you know I'm your friend. And then the third time he said, am I really your friend? Are you really my friend? Do you really filial me? Do you really love me in that brotherly, friendly sense?

[ 31 : 46 ] He said, and Peter is grieved the third time that he asks him, that kind of love does he have? And what the Lord wants is that complete, total, self-giving love for one another because that's what he gave for us.

This charity that we are to have to all, not just especially we're to love the brotherly, but we're also to love our fellow men and women and mankind in general.

Why? Because this is what God is like. He has any special love for his own family. Yes, all those whom he has redeemed, all those who are his. Yes, of course he does.

But likewise, he loves the human race that he has made. And God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And so likewise, although he has redeemed his own, he has loved all. And it begins with faith and it concludes with love. Now, abide in faith, hope, charity.

[ 32 : 45 ] These three, but the greatest of these is charity. The greatest of all is love. Now, of course, all of these virtues are not self-contained.

They feed into one another. You can't say, well, today I'm going to work on the brotherly kindness. But we're going to forget about the temperance and we're not going to worry too much about the knowledge today.

But the brotherly kindness, we're going to focus on these things full together. It's like when you're a wee baby and you grow your body, it develops and grows. You know, well, first of all, we're going to grow the arm. And once the arm is grown, then we'll grow the left leg.

And then we'll grow the right leg. And then the other. No, all your loons and all your torso and all your parts, it'll grow gradually at the same stage. And your arms and legs and body, it'll all develop proportionately, all at the same kind of weight.

So likewise, your faith and virtue and knowledge and temperance and patience and so on, these will grow gradually like the rings out from the tree. It's not that we can really major on one but neglect the other.

[ 33 : 47 ] If you're majoring on the Lord, if you're belonging to the Lord, these things will gradually grow. They will expand. They will increase. In the normal way of going on with the Lord.

We don't expect people, as we say, we don't expect a baby to be the same at two years as it is at two weeks. We expect growth. And in our Christian life, we should be growing. And we should think, oh, well, I'm not growing.

I'm not doing anything. I'm not increasing. I'm not more virtuous. I'm not more godly than I used to be. Oh, what am I going to do? That's like a little child saying, oh, I'm only six years old. What am I going to be like at 18 if I'm still the same size?

So I'm not going to be. You'll grow. And likewise, if you go on with the Lord, if you seek him in prayer and in his word and worship and seeking to put the gospel into practice, you will grow.

The Lord will supply your needs. You shouldn't panic about, oh, I'm not doing this. I'm not doing that. Remember, this is ultimately the work of God and we cooperate in what God does.

[ 34 : 53 ] We can't redeem ourselves, but we can work on that which he has given us. So these graces must grow and develop.

And the more we have, the more we're able to increase. If you put money in the bank and you finally get out to, say, a thousand pounds, then the interest on a thousand pounds will be more than it was on ten pounds.

Because as it grows, the interest will grow. Theoretically, used to anyway. I mean, it'll increase the more you have. Like people say, the only thing you need to make a lot of money is a lot of money in the first place. The more you have, the more you will acquire and be given.

Jesus said in Matthew 25, verse 29, unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

The Lord expects us to use that which he has given us. And it will take all that you have. It will take all of your life.

[ 35 : 50 ] That's why it says, beside this, giving all diligence at your faith. And later on it says, of course, there in verse 10, wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

If you do these things, you shall never fall. You won't fall. Just keep growing. Just keep doing it day by day. It's not rocket science, and it's not beyond the understanding of the simplest, most trusting child.

But it is vital that we do it. That we keep on going on with the Lord. We keep on growing in grace. It is likewise always that there is work needing done.

It's like property. You know, property or a garden or anything, you know, there's always something needing painted, something needing mended, something needing repaired. There's always grass to be cut. There's always weeds to be pulled.

There's always work to be done. It's ongoing. And likewise, your faith, your relationship with the Lord is ongoing. It's not plastic. It's not static. It's not like a stone.

[ 36 : 53 ] You can't just leave it, and it will take care of itself. It has to be worked at. But the Lord gives us the strength, the ability, the means to do so. He has given us the faith. He has given us the start.

And he expects us to work at it. He has given us the diamond. He expects us to polish it. He has given us the prize. He expects us to value it.

And to put it to use. So that we can present it to the end and say, this is what you gave me, Lord. This is what you have at the end. It will grow, and it will increase if we are prepared in the Lord's strength to work.