

One Thing

by William MacDonald

The one thing that is needed for salvation, assurance, and worship is to choose the good part that will not be taken away.

Duration: 44:14

Scripture: Luke 18:18

Topics: "Seeking The Lord"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of genuine salvation and a transformed life. He shares the story of a wealthy man who approached Jesus asking about eternal life but was unwilling to give up his possessions. The preacher challenges the audience to examine their own hearts and question whether they have truly been born again. He highlights the need for a personal relationship with God, a life of worship, and a clear aspiration and goal in life. The sermon also mentions the powerful transformation that can occur in the lives of those who turn to Christ, particularly referencing individuals who have been delivered from addiction and experienced true salvation.

Transcript

Well, it's always good to be back at Greenwood Hills to enjoy the fellowship of God's people. This morning I'd like to talk to you on one thing. One thing.

But don't jump to conclusions. Some of you think you'll get out early, just because we're only going to speak about one thing. Would you turn, first of all, to Luke, Chapter 18, please, and let's read a few verses there.

Luke, Chapter 18, and I'll begin reading at verse 18. Now, a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? So Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is God. You know the commandments.

Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother. And he said, All these I have kept from my youth.

So when Jesus heard these things, he said to him, You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me. But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

This one thing is the one thing of salvation, isn't it? This young fellow had the world as his oyster. Everything was going his way. It was a righteous, moral fellow.

As far as he could see, he had kept all of those commandments that dealt with love for his neighbor, because those were the commandments that Jesus singled out for him. But did he really love his neighbor as himself? Go sell all that you have and give to the poor. And he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

He lacked the one most important thing in life, and that is salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear friend, today you may have all that the world offers. You may have personality, you may have good looks, you may have possession, you may be the envy of other people, but I want to tell you, if you don't have salvation, that one thing, you're the poorest of the poor.

And I think it'd be good for us to search our hearts this morning. Have I genuinely been born again? Have I ever truly been saved? Or do I only have a profession of faith in Christ? Maybe I can help you. If your life is the same as it always has been, you've never been saved, because salvation is a mysterious, miraculous, supernatural work of the Spirit of God that changes a person.

And if there has been no change, there's been no new birth. The United States today is swept by a tremendous wave of professions. You read the statistics of how many born-again people are in the United States, you say, isn't that marvelous? Not marvelous at all.

Not marvelous at all is even true. You know it by the lives of those who profess the name of Christ and live as if there were no Bible. It's a very serious matter.

We had three young women in our assembly in California recently, baptized and in fellowship. Three of them got saved recently. It's really nice to see the Christians getting saved.

When I say that, you know what I mean, don't you? They had nothing but a profession. I said to them, come on Mary, you were saved. She said, Bill, I never repented of my sins.

She said, I attended a meeting, and an invitation was given, and I went forward, and I prayed the prayer. But she said, I was never saved. What do you think of that? And two others followed her in saying, no, I never really was saved before.

Mary had never repented. Friends, without repentance, there is no salvation. Salvation is a two-sided coin.

One side is repentance toward God, and the other side is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not two separate steps in salvation. Two sides of the same coin.

You can't really exercise saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ without being repentant. Something serious to think about, isn't it? But I want to tell you, a well-saved soul shows it by his or her life. And to me, that's the miracle of men and women whose lives have been shattered by sin.

They hear the gospel of redeeming grace, and they respond, and they become new creatures in Christ Jesus. I tell you, it's marvelous, and it's a great joy to meet these people. There's no question about their salvation.

Young people who've been on drugs and alcohol, burnt out, and then God, in his marvelous sovereignty, reaches down and touches their lives, and they respond, and they they're convicted of sin, and they fall

down before the Lord, and they repent of that sin, and they reach out to Christ, and they trust him as their only hope for heaven, and they're saved. You don't have to go around telling people they're saved. You can tell it by their lives.

You can tell it when they open their mouths, because they talk about the Lord. This young fellow took wealth, more wealth probably than most of us here have ever had, but he didn't have the Lord, and he flunked the tests, and he went away sorrowful, for he had great possession. How is it with you? I ask you to search your heart today.

Have I been genuinely born again? Not only can I look back to a day and an hour, but can I look back and see a work that God has done in my life, changing me, giving me a new love for holiness, a new hatred for sin, teaching me to walk in separation from the world and its rotten, false, shallow ways. That's salvation. You know, some years ago, a gangster went to a meeting in Madison Square Gardens, and he professed faith in Christ.

Everybody said, oh, is that wonderful. It never changed his life. He carried on in underground activities, underworld activities.

And somebody chatted with him and said, look, you professed faith in Christ in Madison Square Gardens, and there hasn't been a change. He said, nobody ever told me there had to be a change in my life, he said. He said, you have Christian actors, you have Christian politicians.

He said, why not Christian gangsters? And you've never heard from them since. That was it. Sure, he had a profession.

He said the right words. Listen, you can say all the right words, and you can know all...it's one of the problems that young people brought up in Christian atmosphere, isn't it? They know all the right words, and they know all the right answers. They don't have the root of the matter in them.

You can tell it by their lives. One thing you lack, Jesus said, and lacking that, he lacked really the most important thing in life. Nothing as important as to know that your soul's salvation is assured through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonderful work he did on the cross of Calvary.

Turn to John chapter 9. John chapter 9. Here you have the thrilling story of the man who was born blind, and the wonderful work that God did in his life, and it aroused opposition. Funny, isn't it? You can be a dope addict, and you can be an alcoholic, and the world will receive you quite gladly, but when God does a work of grace in your life, watch out, there's going to be opposition, there's going to be persecution. They all think it's strange that you run out with them to the same excessive riots, speaking evil of you, but that's what was happening to this poor fellow.

His only crime was Christ, and they couldn't get him out of the synagogue fast enough. And so, they came to his parents, and they said, what about this son of yours? And his parents said in verse 23, he is of age, ask him. So, they again called the man who was blind and said, well, give God the glory.

We know that this man is a sinner, he answered. Whether he's a sinner or not, I do not know. One thing I know, though I was blind, now I see.

That's lovely, isn't it? What did he know? He knew there was a tremendous change in his life, didn't he? Assurance. This is the one thing of assurance, assurance of self. God wants those who are genuinely

saved to know they're saved.

And there are many different ways of knowing that a person is saved. I suppose the first and basic way is through the word of God, isn't it? These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. Even you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that isn't all, though.

That isn't all. You can know it because you have a different attitude toward Christian people than you had before. This is one of the things that was noticeable in my life.

I was brought up in a very sheltered, separated Christian home. And I want to tell you something, the Christians really annoyed me. They really did.

They said, Bill, now you say get nice, fellas, and forget it, you know. I thought something else, but I won't say it. But you know, when I trusted Christ as my Savior, that attitude changed.

I thought they were the cream of the earth, and that never changed my mind. Never changed my mind. That was a tremendous change that came in me.

It's one that changed from rebellion to not only acceptance, but love of the Christian people. Then when they asked me about it, I said I didn't mind telling them at all. Didn't mind witnessing a good confession of Jesus Christ.

But I began to see other changes in my life, too. They didn't all take place at once. They haven't all taken place yet.

But I began to see these changes taking place in my life. A new regard for righteousness, a new sensitivity to sin, and of course the conflict within, too. The conflict between the two natures.

Wow, never had that before. I began to wonder if I'm really saved. Am I really saved? I think I had deeper conviction of sin after I was saved than I did at the time, although I had it at the time.

At the time, before I was saved, God showed me that what Phil McDonald was inside was a lot worse than anything he had ever done. Do you know that today? What you are inside is a lot worse than anything you've ever done. But praise God, Jesus died for that, too.

In his work on the cross of Calvary, he died for what we are, just as much as for the sins we've committed. What we are is a lot worse. And that came as a bomb to my soul.

But I had this tremendous conflict of the two natures which I never had before I was saved. A lot of people begin to doubt their salvation when they have that conflict. Actually, it's one of the great proofs of salvation, because now you have not only an old, evil, corrupt nature that loves to feed on garbage and flops them and jets them, but you have a new nature that loves to feed on Christ and on the word of God and fellowship with the people of God.

These things are unmistakable. What a marvelous testimony. I don't know whether he's a sinner or not, but he said, one thing I know, I was blind, now I can see.

A marvelous miracle of grace, wasn't it? Actually, the Creator was there that day, because if you're born blind, you need new optic nerves. So, that's just exactly what Jesus did for him. He gave him new optic

nerves, and he became a witnessing believer.

And I think that's another good sign of salvation, isn't it? We say murder will out. Well, so will salvation. If it's in, it's going to come out.

If you really believe in something, you won't keep it a secret. And if the Lord Jesus is really your Savior, your Lord and Savior, you're going to confess him to others. Sometimes it's hard to confess it to your own loved ones.

Harder. We had a Marine coming to our meeting a few years ago, and he went through a time of conviction of sin, and then I was going to leave on a trip to South America, and he was going to leave to go to Hawaii, and I better speak to Rick. So, I said, Rick, could we go out on the front porch and just have a talk? And he said, well, let's do that.

And we went out on the front porch, and before I could sit down, he said to me, Bill, he said, I've trusted Christ as my Savior. He said, I'm having a hard time telling my wife. I said, I'm not going to tell her.

But I want to tell you, before the day was over, he told her. And they've been going on happily for the Lord ever since, he and his wife. Wonderful thing, isn't it? You have the one thing of salvation, you have the one thing of assurance of salvation, but you know, there's something else.

In Luke 10, verse 42. Luke 10, verse 42. Well, I have to go back and begin at verse 38.

It happened as they went that he entered a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.

And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but one thing is needed. There it is. One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her.

We could call this the one thing of worship, couldn't we? Now, I have to be honest with you today. I am more a Martha than I am a Mary. I say that to my shame.

I am more a Martha than I am a Mary. A workaholic, like to be active and busy, but God never asks of us such busy labor as leaves no time for sitting at his feet. The patient attitude of expectation oft times counts the service most complete.

And I know what God loves. God loves people who worship him. I remember years ago, dear old A.S. Lawazzo met me at the station in Baltimore and drove me to his house.

They had two dogs. Actually, believe it or not, one was white and the other was black. And when we got there, that black dog came and just jumped all over A.S. Lawazzo and lavished love on him and licked him.

I mean, it was really a spectacular display of worship. And the white dog skulked near the hedges there. And Mr. Lawazzo pointed at the white dog and he said, that dog knows nothing about worship.

You know, it makes me ask myself, what do I know about worship? One of the magazines which will go unnamed, and I hope forgotten, recently said, we have all eternity to worship. Let's get on with soul winning now. Is that doctrinally right? Not what my Bible says.

The Lord, the Father, seeketh such to worship him. This is the purpose of our existence, isn't it? To be worshipped. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

It really is true. And dear friends, if I miss that in my life, I'm going to miss what's really central. After the breaking of bread last Sunday night at a meeting in our area, two men stood up and both of them, in their worship, broke down and wept.

And you know, I felt so convicted. I felt so convicted. I said, Lord, deliver me from the curse of a dry-eyed Christianity.

How I can stand the mystery o'er, and not be moved to love him more. The poem says, a wonder to myself I am, that I can stand the mystery o'er, and not be moved to love him more. I was talking to an ex-Catholic, he's not saved yet, but after the breaking, he was there observing the breaking of bread, and afterwards I mentioned that to him.

I said, I feel so convicted hearing these men getting up and breaking down and weeping over the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and the love, the incomparable love of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, the Catholics have an interesting expression, it's called the gift of tears. And I thought, I wish I had that gift.

I was brought up in a Scottish family, I'm sure some of you were too, and nobody ever told me that it was unmanly to weep, but it was kind of part of the breeding, I guess. But it's not good, it's really not good. But I can see how the Lord really loves those who come before him broken-hearted, and think of Calvary, think of what he did there on the accursed tree, and all for us.

Melts my heart to tears, Lord. One thing, is needed. Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her.

Martha was distracted, so easy to be distracted. When we come, I think, for the worship meeting, we have to pray, Lord, deliver me from distractions. I've been in worship meetings where I keep my eyes closed all the time.

If I opened them, I would be distracted by what I saw around me. She just wanted zero in on that greatest of all persons, and the greatest of all subjects. But there's another one thing, and it's in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 13.

Philippians chapter 3, verse 12. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay a hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do.

Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind, and if anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule.

Let us be of the same mind. I call this the goal of aspiration, the goal of aspiration, this one thing I do. Somebody has said, watch out for the one thing people.

They're the people that get something accomplished in life. And that's a wonderful thing, I think, once we become Christians, to get our goal set, like the Apostle Paul did. This one thing I do.

Forgetting those things which are behind. Now, when we read that, we often think of, I think, sins. Forgetting the sins that are past, you know.

Our sins have been washed away, the past is blotted out as far as God is concerned. He can't find a single sin with which to punish us with eternal death. Isn't that what you think about, forgetting those things? It's not exactly, I think, in the context here.

Paul had been listing all his assets as a man in the flesh, all the things he could have been proud about, all his attainments in Judaism, all his religiousness, if you will. He says, forgetting all these things that are behind. Wonderful, isn't it? Wonderful to have your goal set, and doing the thing that pleases the heart of Christ, reaching forth to the prize.

Recently I was talking to a young fellow who's a cadet at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Godly, spiritual young man. He's there from the Singapore government.

He has a commitment to fulfill that he said to me, honestly, I don't know why I'm here, because this isn't where my heart is. So, what do you think of this? He said, here I'm calling there, getting a degree in engineering. I said, what do you think of that? I said, I think it's nice.

Nice to get a degree and then just lay it at the feet of Jesus. That's what so many of us do in our lifetime, don't we? Strive, you know, to get academic achievement and get the degrees after our name, and then we just come, we gladly lay them at the feet of the Lord Jesus. We offer what we cannot keep, what we have ceased to love.

God can produce that wonderful change in our lives, can't he? Why did the Apostle Paul make such a name for God, not for himself, but a name for God in the world? This one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize. The goal, of course, is the ribbon there at the end of the race.

The prize? The Savior's well done. I think it's kind of sad to see the world, I mean, to see Christians spending their lives for the world's prizes. Ever think about that? The world has these pieces of ribbon, you know these pieces of ribbon, they're kind of cut diagonally down here at the bottom, and they have printing on them, they say first prize, second prize, third prize.

It's marvelous what a person will do for a piece of ribbon, isn't it? Listen, you can go down to Woolworth's and buy it by the yard. The people will knock themselves out for that piece of ribbon. I was going to talk about this one time, and I thought, well, I'll see if I can get some of those, have you heard of gold-loving cups? Gold-loving cups.

It's marvelous what people will do to get one of those. So, I scoured around, where would I ever find a gold-loving cup? You know where I ended up? At a joke shop. They sold them in the joke shop, and I bought one.

Easier to buy it than to run 18 miles to get it. You know what made up? Plastic. There was no gold in it.

It was made of plastic, gold veneer, I guess, something like that. Hmm. That's the world.

The world with all its emptiness, and the world with all its false ways. And yet, Christians will give the very finest of their lives to academic honors, the honors of the world, to ribbons. Napoleon held up a piece of ribbon, and he said, with these I could build an empire.

And he was right, too. With these I could build an empire. I can see why men of the world would go after those things, but why a Christian would ever allow his mind, her mind, to be so influenced as to give their very finest for the empty honors that the world has to offer.

Paul had set his sights on higher things. Paul was looking for higher dividends than the world can ever offer, and it's no great sacrifice. Paul said, all that the world has to offer, he counted it as refuse, refuse.

And Darby said, it's no great sacrifice to give up refuse. A wonderful thing when our eyes are enlightened from above, and we see the glorious calling of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we stop raking in the muck heap. That's the tragedy of many a life today, raking in a muck heap, while above us burns the vision of the Christ upon the cross.

Dear friends, only the Lord Jesus is important, and only the life that's lived wholeheartedly for him really counts. That's what Paul is saying in this marvelous chapter. In his great statement of profit and loss, he's willing to sacrifice everything for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, for whom he suffered the loss of all things, and it was literally true.

The one thing of aspiration, determination, not desire, controls our destiny. If you just wait and take what life gives you, you'll never make history for God. Determination, not desire, is what determines our destiny.

And Paul realized that. He set his sight on things above and went straight for them. There's another one thing that we could think about, Psalm 27, and verse 4. Psalm 27, verse 4. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Isn't that beautiful? I call this the one thing of communion. The one thing of communion. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

David was an interesting man, kind of a man of opposites, just like the rest of us. He had his weaknesses and his failures, just like the rest of us, but I want to tell you, he was a worshiper. And when he opened his mouth in the psalm, it came out hissing hot, his love and adoration for the Savior.

Now, I find that convicting, too. I find that very convincing. Why? Because David didn't know the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God the way believers do today, did he? He didn't.

And he didn't have a Bible the way we have it. He never knew the New Testament. He never knew the great truths that were revealed by the prophets and apostles of the New Testament.

He never knew them. They were hidden, completely hidden from him in the purposes of God. Yet what he knew just brought forth a marvelous chords of worship from his heart, like a great organ swelling in its sound.

He said, this is what I want. I want a life of communion and fellowship with the Lord. That's what he wanted.

Is that what we want? A life of communion and fellowship with the Lord. A life not lived in the suburbs, but in the sanctuary. That's what he was saying.

I don't want to be an occasional visitor to the secret place of the Most High. I want to live there. And you know that's possible for us, too, isn't it? I'm afraid too often we're just occasional visitors.

We're vagrants instead of residents to the secret place of the Most High. It doesn't have to be that way. We can live in constant fellowship, day by day, enjoying his presence with us.

I've often quoted that little poem. Maybe I've quoted it here before, I don't know. But it's a tremendous help in my life.

Anne Grannis wrote, I want my life so cleared of self that my dear Lord may come and set up his own furnishings and make my heart his home. And since I know what this requires, each morning while it's still, I slip into that secret place and leave with him my will. He always takes it graciously, presenting me with his.

I'm ready then to start the day in any task there is. And this is how my Lord controls my interests, my ills, because we meet at break of day for an exchange of wills. I recommend that to you.

You want to live a life of fellowship with the Lord every day at the beginning of the day, say, Lord Jesus, I come to you now for exchange of wills. I take your will for the next 24 hours, and I give you my will. And you know, then you can go forth praising and at rest.

And no matter what happens during the day, this is part of God's will for you. No accidents, no tragedies. You've committed the day to him, and it's just wonderful to see his sovereign purposes being brought out in the day.

This is being filled with the Spirit, allowing the Spirit of God to control us in all of our lives. David knew what it meant to lose touch with the Most High. He knew the hardness of the way of the transgressor.

He knew of the scorpion bite of sin. He said, I don't want it. I want a life lived in fellowship with my Lord.

Now, this is the best life, isn't it? It was the best life health-wise and every other way. I often think of that. So many of the ills of unsaved people today are self-induced, aren't they? God has given us all men, he's given them a Christian heart, a Christian lungs, a Christian liver, Christian kidneys, whatever you mean by that.

I mean, obedience to the Word of God is good for you. It's good for you. Yeah, what about Christians and stuff? That's different.

That's different. God allows those things to happen in our lives, and then he triumphs over them for his glory, for our good, and for the blessing of others. I know that's true.

I'm speaking of things in general. Obedience to the Word of God is good for us. It's true of all God's commands.

God's commandments are more for my good than they're for his. What difference does it make to the great sovereign of the universe? He could live in perfect joy without my existence, but he's given us these commandments for our own good, for our own health, and for our own well-being. So, the marvel of this one thing of communion.

The British Medical Society said years ago, there's not a single cell in the human body wholly removed from the Spirit. In other words, what's good for you spiritually is good for you physically, too, and we know that's true today, and medical science knows that's true, too. Not a single cell in the human body that's wholly removed from the Spirit.

So, you have several one things in the Bible, don't you? The one thing of salvation. Let's test ourselves. I ask you today, have you ever truly repented of your sins? Have you ever reached out to the Lord Jesus Christ, believing that he died for you on the cross of Calvary, and claimed him as your only hope for heaven, renouncing works, character, or anything else? Lord Jesus, you and you alone.

And can you see a change in your life that you did that? You had the fruit of the Spirit in your life. I was reading to my friend David Reeve, who's with us today, yesterday from a book from J. H. Jarrett. He said, it's not what happens at the penitence bench, it's what you are at the work bench.

You know, that's really true. It's not how you behave at the Lord's table, it's what you are at the breakfast table. It's all too possible to be an angel in the assembly in a grouch at home.

I want to know, has there been a change in your life? The one thing of salvation, the one thing of assurance, this one thing I know, I was blind, and now I see. Tremendous transformation, miraculous change in the life. It's supernatural, something the world can't explain.

Reason is left dumb in the presence of the change that is wrought by God's salvation. The one thing of worship, one thing is needed. This speaks to me very, very deeply.

Am I really a worshiper of the Lord? Do I bring joy to his heart as I kneel before him and pour out my heart in adoration? The one thing of aspiration. Do I have my goals set? Do I know what I'm after? Am I just drifting in life? Am I just becoming an expert in the sediments of Chesapeake Bay? Can I say, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? And then finally, the one thing of communion, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, to inquire into his holy temple. May the Lord help us all to be one thing, men and women, not devoting our lives to trivia, but getting at the very heart of the matter, shall we pray? I'd just like to say before I do pray that if there's anyone here and God has spoken to your heart, you have any problems, you'd like to talk them over, I'll just stay down here at the front if you'd like to come and share any questions you might have, you feel free to do it.

We'd love to talk to you, and there are others here, if there's more than one, there's others here who would be very happy to help. Father, we thank you for your word, and most of all for your lovely son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll never get over the wonder of it that he would do what he did in order to save ungodly sinners, that he would give himself, that he would shed his blood, that he would pour out his life, that he would suffer the pains of eternal hell in our room instead, there at the cross of Calvary.

We just thank you for the word of God and how you speak to us through it, how it is a living word, not like Shakespeare or Milton, but a living word, sharply dividing. We pray that you will speak to us through the

word this morning, that we might indeed be men and women of singleness of purpose, making it our one pure desire to please you in all things. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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