

Sermon preached at Faith Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Virginia,  
on Sunday, February 12, 1995, by the Rev. W. Graham Smith, D.D.

### **GALATIANS 6:7**

“A man reaps what he sows.”

### **BIBLICAL BOOMERANGS**

A boomerang is an interesting invention of the Australian aborigines. It is a remarkable application of aerodynamics in that, if you take it and throw it, it will come right back to you! It is thrown with a strong arm and wrist movement and sweeps upward to a height of 50 feet or more. It then completes a circle or oval 50 yards wide, and as it turns around to return, it may complete up to five smaller circles or ovals before it drops to the ground near the thrower. Many people here in our own country are fascinated by them, and there is actually an American Boomerang Association.

You know, there are a lot of things in the Bible that are like a boomerang, things that teach us that what you put out there is what is going to come back to you.

If you read Matthew 25:14-30, you find Jesus giving a parable about that. He said, “Three men were given talents. One received five; another two; and yet a third was given one.” The importance of that parable is: What do you do with what you have? The man who was given five talents threw them out, as it were, and ten came back. The man who had two threw his out, and he got four back. But the man who was given just one talent, buried it in the ground to keep from losing it. But in so doing, he really lost it, and it was given to somebody else.

Now this basic principle applies throughout life. Each of us is given talents. What we do with what we have determines where we will be tomorrow and next year, and ten years from now.

I’d like to suggest four biblical boomerangs, and I want you to look at them as, individually, we examine our own lives. These are God’s truths concerning how we are to use what we have been given.

#### **1. What you invest is what you inherit.**

Only what you put into life is what you are going to get back later in life.

Suppose I go into a bank where I don’t have an account and ask them to cash a check for me. The first question the teller would ask is: “Have you an account here?” “No, I don’t, but I want to cash this check in your bank.” “But we don’t do that!” “But I’ve seen other people get their checks cashed here!” And then comes the cruncher when I’m told, “You’re smart enough to know that you can’t take something out if you haven’t put something in first!”

But a lot of folks go through life with that mentality. They think, “Hey, I’m going to get

something good out, even though I never invest anything.” That’s why the irresponsible use of credit cards can land you in such trouble.

There’s a thoughtful lady, Mrs. Helen Berry, who lives in Danvers, Massachusetts. That city recently celebrated its centenary. When they celebrated it, they discovered that the Chamber of Commerce had no money for festivities; so, they tried to raise some money, but it was a meager celebration at best. Mrs. Berry said, “I don’t want that to happen to my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One hundred years from now, when they have the 200th anniversary of our city, I want them to really have something to enjoy. So, she went to 100 people and asked each one to give her \$10. She then took the \$1,000 and invested it; and they have estimated that if growth rates for the next 100 years remain what they have been for the past 30 years, then 100 years from now that \$1,000 will have produced \$1,702,301! What you invest today is what you’re going to inherit tomorrow.

Now you see the application of this, don’t you? Let me address you parents in particular. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go.” You must invest biblical and Christian principles in the life of your child, and give him a clear understanding of the Gospel: And then comes the promise — “When he is old he will not depart from it.” In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul says to Timothy, “You remember the things that you were taught by your mother and your grandmother.” Parents, the most important investment you will ever make is in those children whom God has entrusted to you. I assure you that you can’t inherit something years from now that you don’t invest in early in their lives.

Penn State University released a study recently which showed that if both parents smoke, 86% of their children will smoke. But if neither parent smokes, only 6% of their children will ever use tobacco. The point of the study was that what children learn by example from their parents is what they themselves will strive for in life.

Gene Stallings, the football coach of the University of Alabama, was speaking at a black-tie dinner not long ago. One thousand people were in attendance. In the course of his address Mr. Stallings said that he had been reflecting recently on what was the most important accomplishment in his life. Now here was a man who had won a national championship, and who has lucrative endorsements. He has fame and fortune. But Stallings said this — “As I look back, the number one accomplishment of my life is this: That my children, as they have grown up, have all become Christians, and they have all married Christian mates.” What a wonderful testimony!

Take a good look at this boomerang, parents. The best way for you to ensure that your children will grow up to be Christians, is for you to invest in their lives early, because what you invest is ultimately what you will inherit. What you put out there is exactly what’s going to come back.

## **2. What you give is what you get.**

In 2 Cor. 9:6 Paul says, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.” In other words, if you throw only a small amount of seed into the ground, you’re not going to have much

of a harvest.

In Mark 10:17ff we read of how one day a wealthy young man came to Jesus and said, “I want to be one of Your followers.” Jesus said, “Fine; keep the commandments.” He said, “I’ve done all of that.” Then Jesus said, “You’re a wealthy man. Your whole life has been getting! I want to teach you a principle and it is this — what you have in life is not what you get but what you give. So, I want you to give to the poor all that you have, and then come, follow Me, and you will have life abundant.” The Bible says that the man dropped his head and then walked away sorrowful because he wouldn’t give it up. His gold meant more to him than his God. Indeed, his gold was his god.

I think of Mr. C. T. Studd, son of a very wealthy father, a graduate of Eton and Cambridge, and one of the finest cricketers that England has ever produced. At age 23 he went with six other friends, all graduates of Cambridge, as a missionary to China. They were known as “The Cambridge Seven.” His father had died and left him a sizable fortune which he would inherit on his 25th birthday. As that day approached, he decided to give the entire fortune to Christ and to take the golden opportunity offered him of doing what the rich young man had failed to do. So, one day Studd sat down and wrote a number of checks. One of them he sent to Mr. D. L. Moody, the evangelist who had been instrumental in leading his father to Christ. Moody used the money to build the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago which to this day is one of the finest Bible colleges in the world. Mr. Studd gave away all but a few thousand pounds of his inheritance. This residue he presented to the girl he was about to marry. But she, not to be outdone, said, “Charlie, what did the Lord tell the rich young man to do?” “Sell all.” “Well, then, we will start clear with the Lord at our wedding!” And they sent the rest of the money to General Booth for the work of the Salvation Army.

Years later, not long before his death in the heart of Africa, when he had become one of the most renowned missionaries of his generation, C. T. Studd wrote these magnificent words: “If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”

Young people, let me say to you, we live in a very materialistic society. So much of success today seems based on how much you can get out of life. I have often counseled people over the years who have said to me, “I’ve gotten everything I set out to achieve, and it has left me flat and cold and miserable.” You will never get enough in life to make you happy. The Bible principle is — it’s not what you get but what you give to others that can bring fulfillment and joy to your life. The only thing you’ll ever be able to keep is what you’re willing to give in His service. Everything you try to get for yourself you’re going to lose ultimately. Remember what Jesus said, “If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for My sake and for the sake of the Gospel, will ever know what it means to really live!” (Mark 8:35 L.B.)

### **3. What you plant is what you produce.**

What you put into life is exactly what you’re going to get out of it. You can’t plant peas in a garden and expect corn to come up. Whatever you plant into your mind and heart is exactly

what you're going to produce some day. Young people, never forget that. Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

In a large farming community where potatoes were the staple crop, because times were getting a bit hard, when the people started harvesting the potatoes, rather than keeping the best potatoes for re-planting, they decided to set aside just the small, scrawny ones, and keep the best for themselves. Of course, they discovered the next year that the potatoes they produced were much smaller because the seed potatoes they had planted were smaller.

If you keep the best for yourself and just replant the scrawniest, it's going to be evident in your life next year, and the year after that, and the year after that. What you and I plant is what we ultimately produce.

In 1 Kings 21 we read about King Ahab. One day he looked out and saw a beautiful vineyard, and he said, "I want that vineyard." He went to Naboth who owned it and said, "I want to buy your vineyard." He said, "But it's not for sale." Ahab said, "I'll give you whatever you ask for it." Naboth said, "My parents had this vineyard; they passed it down to me. I don't want to sell it." Ahab went back to the palace, went into his bedroom, and had a temper tantrum. His wife, Jezebel came in, and the Bible says, "He was sullen and angry... he lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat." (verse 4) She said, "What's the matter with you?" He told her, and she said, "Do you want me to get that vineyard for you? Let me take care of it." So, she set up a plot against Naboth and had him killed. She then came back and said to Ahab, "Relax, dear. You can have the vineyard now. Naboth met with an accident, and he's dead."

The prophet Elijah heard about it, and he had the courage to confront Ahab, and he said to him, "I know what you've done;" and pointing a bony finger right in his face, he gave him this basic biblical principle. He said, "Ahab, someday on those very stones where Naboth was killed, the dogs are going to come and lick your blood." And a short time later Elijah's prophecy was fulfilled, and the dogs licked up the blood of the King.

God doesn't pay off every Saturday night, but He always pays off. Whatever it is in life that you plant today is going to come up in the future. The birds always come home to roost. Just ask anyone who has contracted AIDS as a result of indiscriminate sex or drug use.

We should be very careful what we read or watch on television; the videos or movies on which we feast our eyes. Be careful, young people, about the kind of friends you keep. You see, your mind is like a computer: What goes in comes out.

The worst commercial airline disaster in history occurred some years ago at Tenerife in the Canary Islands. A KLM 747 and a Pan Am 747 somehow crashed head-on on the runway, and 583 people lost their lives. When the black boxes were examined, they revealed the last words of each pilot. Both of them realized what was about to happen just a few seconds before impact. One pilot exploded in a string of profanity; the other was praying to God.

Let me ask you — When the tough times come in life and you react spontaneously, what comes out? I'll tell you what comes out — what has been planted long before. Remember the

computer: What goes in comes out.

#### **4. What you judge is what judges you.**

In Matthew 7:1-5 Jesus enunciates a very strong basic principle. We all like to look at other people and try to size them up and judge them. Too often we stereotype people. Look what Jesus says, “Don’t judge, because the standard of measurement you use to judge others will be the same standard that is used to judge you.” He goes on to say, “You have a tendency when you look at your brother, to see a speck of sawdust in his eye — just a small thing wrong with his life; while at the same time you pay no attention to the plank — the enormous problem and fault in your own life!” “Therefore,” He says, “there’s no place for folks to pass judgment on anyone else.”

Remember that you and I can never be stereotyped. You are a unique person. There is no one in the world just like you. So, don’t let anyone pass an unfair judgment on you, and don’t you judge anyone unfairly either.

A preacher was called to a rural congregation just after the Civil War came to an end. His wife and he were driving their buggy through the countryside one summer afternoon, and as they passed a farm, they saw a man sitting in a chair in the middle of a field. The minister looked at his wife, and said, “Isn’t that ridiculous. That’s a lazy farmer, isn’t it? He must be a shiftless character. He’s sitting there hoping for the crops to grow, but he’s not working.” They slowed the horse down as they kept looking back at this strange sight. But suddenly they saw two crutches leaning against the chair, and then they saw the man get up, and to their amazement they realized that there was one empty leg in his overalls. He had only one leg. And as he got up, he positioned himself on the crutches and took his hoe and slowly, and no doubt painfully, started to weed between the rows of the growing crops. All of a sudden it was an entirely different situation. No longer was he a lazy, shiftless character. He was, no doubt, a war veteran, handicapped and on crutches, doing the best he could. The preacher said, “God forgive us for misjudging a very courageous man.”

You see, the sobering thing is that when I judge somebody, I never know everything about him or her. So, watch this boomerang. Jesus said, “Remember, the standard of judgment that you have used on other people is the very same standard that I’m going to use on you.” So that means that the way we are judged is the way we have judged other people.

Somebody wrote these lines:

“I dreamed death came the other night,  
And heaven’s gates swung open wide;  
With timely grace an angel came  
And ushered me inside.  
There, to my astonishment, stood folks  
I had known on earth;  
Some I’d judged and labelled  
As unfit and of no worth.

Indignant words rose to my lips,  
But never were set free;  
For every face showed stunned surprise  
Cause nobody expected me!”

Be careful of boomerangs, because when you throw one of those aerodynamic wonders,  
it will always come back to you!

I promise you, parents and young people, and indeed all of us —

- What you invest is what you're going to inherit;
- What you give is exactly what you'll get;
- What you plant is the only thing that you can produce; and
- What you judge will ultimately be what judges you.

Boomerangs! What you throw out there will always come back!

**AMEN.**