

## Without Restraint

### Increasing Lack of Self-Control

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 15-Aug-20; Sermon #1558c

A five-year-old boy, Cannon Hinnant, was murdered last Sunday, August 9, by a 25-year-old man, a next-door neighbor, in Wilson, North Carolina, about forty miles east of Raleigh. The gunman, Darius Sessoms, ran across the lawn toward young Cannon, who was sitting in his front yard on his bike, and shot him in the head at point-blank range as the boy's two sisters, ages seven and eight, looked on. The boy was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Who does such a thing? How does that happen?

Sessoms fled but was apprehended the next day (Monday) by U.S. marshals, Goldsboro police, and Wayne County sheriffs. He has been charged with first-degree murder (as he should) and jailed without bond. Unless he can mount some sort of insanity defense, there is little doubt that he will be convicted and receive a very stiff sentence, perhaps even the death penalty (which North Carolina has), because a neighbor witnessed the incident with her own eyes.

Worse—just adding to all this—the boy's father had invited Sessoms to dinner on Friday night, and he had visited the family's house the afternoon before the murder. He knew young Cannon well and his whole family, and nothing that I have read or heard to date suggests that there was any kind of hard feelings or contention in the relationship. It seemed like a pretty good, neighborly relationship that they had.

How does a grown man pull the trigger of a gun to shoot a preschooler in the head? Even if the little boy had teased him, or rode his bike on his grass, or shouted his head off while he was trying to sleep, cold-blooded murder—execution—is a bit much, don't you think?

We will probably hear more about the context of this terrible crime in the weeks and months to come—that is, if the mainstream media deigns to put it up there. They waited nearly a week before they reported on this. But right now, this murder appears unprovoked and totally incomprehensible. What would make a man do such a thing?

Honestly, I don't know. I am sufficiently and gratefully naïve enough that I cannot conceive of any provocation that would rise to this level of retaliation. Yet, a little boy's life has just been snuffed out for no apparent reason.

In II Timothy 3:1-5, the apostle Paul lists a series of descriptors of the perilous times of the last days. We know that some people have manifested these traits throughout history. We know that they are not new to this time. But Paul's intention, I feel, is to show attitudes that will be widespread and increasing among people at the end time. They have always been there, but the end time will be a time when those things come out in more and more people, and we see them getting worse and worse. It seems to me to be a weighty sign of the end when we observe these attitudes in a growing number of people.

The attitudes that came to mind when I heard about Cannon Hinnant's murder appear in verses 3-4: "without self-control, brutal, . . . headstrong [impulsive]." I have spoken about these before. I keep

returning to these attitudes as I watch the news these days. I see unrestrained, brutal, headstrong, (most) young people (in that age right there—remember, Sessoms is only 25) cursing and attacking police officers, vandalizing statues and buildings, throwing rocks and other projectiles at police and other bystanders, setting fires, beating bystanders, looting stores, and performing many other criminal acts. They are behaving like spoiled brats and acting out without restraint. They are (if you know the meme from social media) the kids that you saw in WalMart or the grocery stores that laid down on the ground and pounded their heels and screamed at the top of their voices because they could not go away from their mother, or could not get the toy or whatever they wanted off the shelf. They were undisciplined, and now are still undisciplined.

I see a lot more out there happening “without restraint.” I do not want to confine it just to what is happening in these protests. Certain politicians seem to be governing without restraint. Certain social groups seem to be operating in the public without restraint. Those caught in the Epstein fiasco appear to have had no restraint sexually. Ordinary people—as we were just hearing about from David [“The Same Mind, Judgment, and Speech”]—use social media without restraint. They turn into trolls in an instant, easily triggered. Crime is spiking all over as the supercharged times loosen people’s inhibitions. I just wonder, when will whole nations begin to behave without restraint against other nations?

There is a reason for this unrestrained behavior, and it is very simple. We can understand it; the sociologists and psychologists of this world do not. They do not even think of this; it never comes to mind. The answer is that people are cutting all ties with God and His Word. That is the reason. It is very plain—very simple. That is what it says in Proverbs 29:18:

**Proverbs 29:18** Where there is no revelation [no vision from God; no prophetic vision; no telling of His will], the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.

God’s Word provides boundaries. The Ten Commandments keep us in-bounds. Godly childrearing guides kids with limits. Attempting to imitate our Savior, Jesus Christ, keeps us on the straight and narrow.

But when godly principles of living are cast aside, Solomon says, the people—unrestrained—run wild. That is what *The Living Bible* says. It is a very graphic way of translating that, but it is true. They run wild. They no longer have a foundation of ethics and morality, so in their “freedom,” they are likely to do anything—and I mean *anything*. More troubling, they are likely to become *worse*. As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 8:11,

**Ecclesiastes 8:11** Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. [It just goes from bad to worse.]

The murder of Cannon Hinnant is a terrible tragedy. I feel for his parents and his sisters. Unfortunately, it is just another in a long list of horrible signs of the corruption of the human heart. We, as members of God’s church, need to heed these signs of the times and work more fervently, preparing *our* hearts in godliness and righteousness for Jesus Christ’s soon return.