

## The Truth Will Set You Free from Rage

"How dare you pull out in front of me you #\*!@!%!#@," the Christian raged toward the driver who couldn't possibly hear him. Then the guilt set in. He had told himself he wouldn't rage like that anymore. He was going to get that under control, when he was driving, when he was dealing with his kids, when he was talking to his wife, when he was leading his employees. Yet, he kept falling prey to it. He would tell himself he wasn't going to do it again. He would apologize to his wife and kids and promise to stop. He even vowed to God to get his rage under control. But when something like this happened, he just couldn't help himself. There was no telling what might come out of his mouth in these situations. It was like rage held him captive.

Have you been there? I have. But Jesus said in **John 8:32**, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (ESV). Rage is a sin. Letting it control us is even worse. But we can break free. Rage is to anger what anxiety is to fear and depression to sadness. According to **Ephesians 4:26**, anger happens and we can do it without sinning. But we see the kind of sins we must not allow to accompany any anger we have in **Ephesians 4:31**: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (ESV). Wrath in this verse is a picture of explosive rage. We must not allow it in our lives. The passage also condemns anger, which in this context refers to a rumbling beneath the surface resentment. Wrath is a picture of a pot of water that has finally hit the boiling point and explodes, but as soon as the heat is removed, dissipates. Anger in this verse is the picture of the water that is just beneath the boiling point, always ready to blow up at any moment, seething and resenting. Neither of these is to be in our lives, let alone control our lives. And truth will set us free from these.

Consider some examples of this.

Let's take the road rage we started with for an example. The driver likes to assert that he just can't control himself; when this happens he simply must blow up in rage. That is just not true. This actually happens because of what he thinks to himself and tells himself about the situation. He believes some lies. First, in the split second between the person cutting him off and the rage, he has told himself that he is entitled and has a right to never be inconvenienced. That others absolutely should pay more attention to where he is and where he is going. He has no doubt forgotten the number of times he accidentally pulled out in front of other people, and is therefore telling himself how no one else knows how to drive like he does. He has told himself how awful it is that someone has made such a mistake. They should have their license revoked.

Here is the truth of the matter. The road does not belong to him. Inconveniences happen. Sometimes they happen to us; sometimes they are caused by us. Certainly, the other driver caused a risk. But having made it through without damage, this driver needs to remember that everyone makes mistakes and it really isn't awful. His life is intact, no one is hurt. The other driver is not malicious or wicked, just a flawed human who makes mistakes. Further, having survived this little incident, the driver ought to burst out in praise and thanksgiving to God who allowed him to survive this dangerous moment. Wouldn't it be great if instead of exploding in rage in these moments, we instead exploded with thanksgiving and praise?

What about Jesus on the cross? If anyone had the right to explode with rage, it would be Jesus. The Jews had falsely accused Him. The Romans had been complicit in this conspiracy to kill Him. They had beaten Him, mocked Him, shoved thorns on His head, driven nails through His hands and feet, attached Him to a cross, and stood it up under the glare of the midday sun. Then they stood around Him and made fun of Him. Interestingly, in this situation, there was some truth that might justify explosive anger. These men really were being malicious. They really were wicked. They really were purposefully trying to hurt Him. But somehow, He was able to avoid the explosive rage and ask God to forgive them instead of destroying them (**Luke 23:34**). Stephen was able to have the same attitude in **Acts 7:60**, and Paul with his abandoning friends in **II Timothy 4:16**. How did they pull this off?

They understood some truths that took precedence. They understood the truth of **Romans 8:31**, that if God is for them, no one else is against them. In other words, the malice and evil intent of these other men did not counteract the love of God. So Jesus, Stephen, and Paul didn't have to be in a rage over their malice. They understood the truth of **Philippians 1:21** that death is gain. For Jesus, He knew His death was the means of saving people. Stephen and Paul recognized death meant being with the Lord. Finally, they understood the truth that the way these people were acting was actually hurting them more than it was hurting Jesus, Stephen, and Paul. These folks were sinning, separating themselves from God, walking a path to hell. Understanding the love of God, these were able to be impacted more by the harm these persecutors and poor friends were causing themselves. Of course, for Stephen and Paul, they were able to see that they had been in the same boat. They were able to remember their own sins and their own need for salvation. Jesus remembered that He came into the world to save sinners, not destroy them.

When rage is holding you captive, look for the falsehoods you are telling yourself in the split second between the stimulus and the rage. Then attack that falsehood with the truth that can set you free. Tell yourself that truth over and over again and then watch how it eventually starts being what you think in the crisis moment. You don't have to be held captive by rage. Jesus can liberate you with His truth if you let Him.

—Edwin L. Crozier