

Ten years without smoking. In July, I think on the eleventh it will be ten years since I last inhaled the ~~ixixix~~ poison of a cigarette, at least from one that I was smoking.

If I were an evangelist I would have this story to tell. I believed and I put aside those cigarettes. I believed and the power to resist temptation was mine, I believed and I was victorious. The trouble is, that is not the way it happened to me at all. *Between the time from 2:10-5:30 I spent a lot of time holding my finger to my throat. I smoked a cigarette. I tried to quit so many times. I tried to quit so many times. I tried to quit so many times.*

Ten years ago my thyroid gland became over active, my pulse rate shot up to 130 at rest. When I puffed on a cigarette, my pulse was about 140. I thought I was dying. ~~Fear, not faith, saved me from cigarettes.~~ *I tried to quit so many times.* ~~Before that I had tried to quit many times.~~ I depended on my will power.

~~and~~ Always the same thing happened. I would manage to go without cigarettes for a day or two or three. It was hard, but I was managing. But then I would think about tomorrow. *Will I be able to work tomorrow without a cigarette? Will I be able to work tomorrow without a cigarette? Will I be able to work tomorrow without a cigarette?* ~~The next hour. Ten minutes from now.~~ *of smoking.* ~~whatever.~~ Until I allowed my mind to focus on the struggles that were ahead for me, I could stand being without a cigarette in the here and now. But as soon as my mind fastened on the battle that was ahead, quitting was too much, I was defeated.

This was the very same feeling that so often threatened to overwhelm me when my children were babies, sick or colicky or stubborn, crying through the night. As that happened in every moment I could handle the crying, the losing of my sleep. But when my mind would fix on how long will this last, will I be up another hour, or tow, will I get any sleep at all. Will it be only tonight or will it be every night night after night, forever. With the moment I was living God provided the strength to meet the challenge, but when my mind was captured by the future, then everything seemed so horrible.

I think about pain, gnawing, aching pain, like the craving for a cigarette, the crying of a baby, pain can be endured in the now, in the this moment. But as soon as I think of pain dominating every moment that is to come for me,

how quickly despair washes over me, panic grips me, the pain becomes my master
my Lord.

All of these, temptation, anxiety and exhaustion, pain gain their power over me when I see them as Lord of my tomorrow. Today I am all right, but what about tomorrow.

~~kingdom after Jesus had been raised from the dead after he had~~
~~kg~~

"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" That is the question that was on the minds of Jesus' followers. They had heard him teach, and preach, They had seen the power of God as the deaf heard, the blind received their sight. As Jesus entered Jerusalem as a king, his way strewn with palm branches, the people calling him Son of David, they were sure that he had come to restore the kingdom to Israel. But instead he had been crucified

Then came Easter as one by one doubt was ~~turned~~ turned to faith, as God turned death into life for Jesus. He was with them, again and again they saw him. And they asked, Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to ~~Israel~~ Israel

Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you ^{shall} ~~will~~ receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. And as he said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.

You will receive power, Jesus told them. Then he left them waiting. Not only did he not tell them when the kingdom would be established, he did not even tell them how long before they would get the Holy Spirit. They were just to wait.

So they waited. Not alone, scattered, but together. They went to Jerusalem, to the upper room where they were staying, and they prayed. Peter and James and John and Andrew, Phillip and Thomas, Bartholemew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All

these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Dont you think they wondered? Would they wait a day, a week, a month, a year for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. For ten days there was nothing but the waiting. Surely doubt must have nibbled at the edges of their faith. "Did we hear him right, could we have been mistaken, is it all an illusion?" ~~and~~ they waited to gether, and prayed.

It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.

A man grows old. Most everyone he has known has walked through the valley of the shadow of death before him, and still he must wait. *He was How long O Lord*

~~It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.~~

For more than forty years Lutherans deported to Siberia had no pastors no one to each or preach, no Bibles. For more than forty years they shared the catechism that had been committed to memory, the scriptures that had been written in their minds. ~~and~~ they waited for God to answer their prayers for the freedom to worship. *And, answered How long O Lord*

~~It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.~~

A woman faces grief. Her husband has died. Her heart cries out, "How long, O Lord, must my beigg ache with this loss. How long ~~will~~ ^{will} my food have no flavor, my days no laughter, my heart no joy? *How long O Lord?*

~~It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority."~~

In 1 Peter we read: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith knowing ~~that~~ that the same experience of suffering is required of your

brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, establish and strengthen you. ~~xxxxxxx~~

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.

That is what they did in that upper room. They gathered humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God. In faith, fears and questionings and uncertainties were silenced as they waited for their Lord. For his Spirit.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.

For the ^{dying} ~~old~~ and the widow and the parent waiting with the crying child through the night, this is God's word. For the ^{the} ~~pastor~~ struggling to control an addiction, for the person whose daily companion is pain, for every one of us gathered here this is God's word: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.

Yes, our adversary the devil prowls like a roaring lion, but most often he does so right in here, in our hearts, wanting us to look ahead, devouring us whenever ~~he can cause us to forget in whose hand tomorrow is.~~ focus our hearts on what we will need tomorrow rather than what we God provides today.

Those who have won victories over addiction, and whom we marvel at how they have joy in the midst of pain, they have learned to be content with what their Lord provides this day. One day at a time ~~they say~~ it is more than a slogan, as they humble themselves under the mighty hand of God who will provide relief in due time. They wait, as they first church waited, together with other believers, in prayer.

The suffering that all of us will know, temptation, grief, pain, ~~and will provide you with the strength to overcome these~~ They are not forever but for a time. ~~The asking for a cigarette fades, some days~~ But what God has done in Jesus Christ, and has planned for you in him is for eternity. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and that in due time he may exalt you.