

Setting your Mind.

A letter from Revd. Richard Johnson and some reflections by Michael Palmer from the letter, Romans 4:13-25 & Mark 8:31-38

Letter from Rev Richard Johnson to two condemned convicts.

In 1794 the administration of the Australian Colony was in the hands of Francis Grose, as Lieutenant General. Grose was a professional soldier and he and Johnson were soon in conflict. This came to a head when Grose prevented Johnson from paying a second visit to two convicts, Fleming and McDonald, who had been condemned to death for housebreaking. Johnson thereupon wrote the following letter to Fleming and McDonald:

My dear friends,

as I am not permitted to come to you, I have only this method to express to you my sincere and deep concern for you in your present unhappy situation.

Let me then beg and entreat [sic] of you to make the best use of the few hours you have left to live. Pray, and pray earnestly to God to give you a true sense of the great evil there is in sin, and of the sinfulness of your own hearts and actions. Pray that you may [k]now what conversion is, and pray for a feeling sense of God's rich and pardoning mercy through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered for sinners. Through Him, and through Him alone you can and may obtain forgiveness. His grace is free and sufficient to save you from that eternal weight and woe, which all impenitent sinners must invariably suffer. Think, oh think of Death, Judgement, and Eternity. There is, my dear friends, there is a Heaven and there is a Hell. One or other of these, it seems, must be your portion or doom in a few hours. Are you fit to die? if not, then how can you think of appearing before God in Judgement? For God's sake, and for the sake of your own precious and immortal souls trifle not with death, trifle not with your souls, which are of more value than ten thousand worlds. Though I cannot pray with you, I hope, so long as you live, I shall not cease to pray for you. Remember, too, that ere long we shall meet again. Then and there, both you and I shall have to give an account of our conduct in this world. And as we shall then be acquitted or condemned, the sentence pronounced will be, either come ye blessed, or depart ye cursed. God pity you. God bless you. So prays your sympathizing Pastor and Friend

Reverend Richard Johnson

Setting your Mind	
Due to circumstances - A prompting to focus your mind	Due to circumstance - Put your mind at rest - 'Set your mind at rest'
My circumstance - Too many books - have to throw some away! What is your current circumstance? (Discuss)	As I get rid of books, I put my mind to rest as: I have not read or used them much, or I've read them already! I am skim reading a few of them nowhere is one -
Aust. & NZ Religious History - 1788 - 1988 - Physicians of the soul.	
Letter to condemned men, Fleming and McDonald. Their mind had to be focussed! Richard Johnson tries to help! You are soon to met your maker Hence, will it be Heaven or Hell?	Rest for your souls is possible - God's rich and pardoning mercy through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered for sinners.
Mark. 8 - Hinge point of the book. Who is Jesus? The answer - He is the Messiah But he is a suffering Messiah! Peter's mind is wrongly focused as Peter says,this cannot be! Jesus clarifies - The way of Jesus is suffering - Lamb of God - Mk 10:45 - to give his life as a ransom for many!	Set you mind at rest - To lose life is the way to save life! In part, this should make sense to most people - even if we have trouble living it out! 1. Grasping, greed and miserly action is the way to enmity - relational ands spiritual death! 2. Generosity, humility and sharing - is the way to friendship and community life! God's way! Be on his side!
Romans 4 - Occasion of the letter - his trip to Spain + introduction to Paul's theological focus (which has caused some tension - Jew & Gentile, and Law & Grace!)	Message of Grace is God's BIG and FIRST word! It came to Abraham before the law was given to Moses. Hence Grace is nothing new - it is God's enduring focus! Faith has always been the foundation of our response to God. As Abraham is God's friend before LAW so we can be God's friend without focus on Law or Jewish Culture! - Jew and Gentile can live together! - Jesus has done it all! Our Lord and Friend!
This all encourages me to focus and be at peace - Pastor and Friend! God to me and me, like Johnson, to all - even the condemned!	