

1842 Circular Letter
Delaware River Baptist Association

The Delaware River Baptist Association to the brethren and sisters composing the churches whom they represent;

Beloved in the Lord,- Inasmuch as you have been, by grace, called out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel, to discern the things of the Spirit, by which is made known to the saints the manifold wisdom of God and the unsearchable riches of Christ; wherein, believing, ye rejoice in hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, while ye are supported in this hope by the great and precious promises of the Gospel, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, suffer the word of exhortation, in the language of the Apostle, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. By the weights, spoken of by the Apostle, we understand all those obstructions which the poor believer is called to grapple with in the progress of his soul in the divine life.

They are, in a word, the corruptions of our own carnal natures, wrought upon by the temptations of Satan and the world; for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. Every weight, therefore, which burthens the believer attaches itself very closely, yet often even insensibly, so that, before we are aware, we are compelled to drag heavily under it. The Apostle, in addressing the Hebrew believers, evidently had chiefly in view those burthens which Judaizing teachers were wont to impose upon them, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and that under the garb of divine authority; but he exhorts the saints to lay them aside as dead weights. Grevious burthens which were calculated to cheat their souls out of the enjoyment of Gospel liberty and peace, and to cherish the spirit of unbelief (which is evidently meant by the sin that doth so easily beset us), and thus lead their faith from its sure foundation, which is Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to the wisdom and power of men.

Dear brethren, do we not plainly see, on every side, men rising up among us, that is, among the professed "church" and professed disciples of Christ, who are trying, by all craft, lying wonders, and deceivableness of unrighteousness, to impose burthens on the shoulders of the disciples, which our blessed Redeemer has never commanded? And have they not in many

instances succeeded, insensibly to us, in fettering our souls and our consciences, and eventually to cause our faith to waver? Yes, brethren, and how easily doth the sin of unbelief beset us? Thus we begin to doubt the immutability of Jehovah's will, His great and precious promises, and the power of His almighty arm to accomplish them; thus turning the eye of our faith away from Christ, instead of looking to Him as its author, finisher, and foundation. O may we daily receive from Him, the fountain of grace and truth, that supply which shall enable us to lay aside every weight and the sin of unbelief, that we may run with patience the race set before us! Our God is not slack concerning His promises, as some count slackness, but will assuredly fulfil all that He hath spoken in the fullness of time. And if He tarry, let us wait for Him for He that shall come, and will not tarry one moment beyond His own time. Hence the race set before us must be run with patience, as well faith, love, zeal, and every grace of the Holy Spirit. Patient under trials, afflictions, persecution, and reproaches, considering the great High Priest of our profession, even Jesus, who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we be wearied and faith in our minds.

William House, *Moderator*.

James C. Goble, *Clerk*.

CORRESPONDING LETTER

The Delaware River Baptist Association, convened with the First Hopewell Church, Mercer County, N.J., to all sister associations with whom she corresponds, sending greeting:

Dear Brethren,- We feel to rejoice that we are again permitted to assemble, in an associate capacity, to attend to the things that belong to the kingdom of Christ here concerning the welfare of our brethren – to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to sympathize with those that are afflicted. But we exceedingly regret that we have not been more favoured with your minutes and messengers. We are a little band, it is true, separated from the many different professions which abound in this region where we are located; but we would hope that you have not forgotten us. It is acknowledged to be a day of peculiar trial to the old school Baptists; but this, instead of causing us to neglect each other and cease our correspondence, should rather draw the bonds of brotherly love still closer, remembering the injunction of the Apostle, “*Let brotherly love continue.*” The more we are tried, and the more we are opposed, so much the more we should endeavour to cleave to each other; to hold up each other's hands, and encourage each other “to run with

patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, and as He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross” and despised the shame to which He was exposed, so let us keep steadily in view the crown of life that is laid up for all those that love His appearing. The reproaches that we have to endure from the “*children of the bondwoman,*” although professors of religion, should rather be an evidence that we are “*the children of the free.*” But let us be careful to maintain good works according to the Scriptures, that we give them no occasion to speak reproachfully; and while our horizon is darkened by the mists of error, let us keep our eye steadily fixed to the word of God, “*that sure word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.*”

As it respects the churches composing our body, the most of us have experience the sifting operation, and are now enjoying peace and harmony, contending for the Truth, which we believe was once delivered to the saints, while others are now undergoing the same painful process. We have had three small churches added to our body at this time, who have come through great tribulation, in endeavoring to free themselves from the yoke of bondage with which they have been entangled. Our present session has been one of profit and delight. The doctrine of salvation by grace has flowed from the lips of our elders, and our deliberations have been harmonious, so that we have reason to exclaim, with the Psalmist, “*how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*”

Our next session will be held, if the Lord will, with our sister church at Kingwood, Hunterdon county, N.J., commencing on the first Friday in June, 1843, at 2 o’clock in the afternoon; and we entreat you, brethren, to favour us with your correspondence, both by your minutes and messengers.

William House, *Moderator.*

James C. Goble, *Clerk.*

Excuse my comments on the above. Here it is 2008, and our “*little bands*” are also scattered and few to be found. In New York, in Maine, in New Hampshire, in Pennsylvania, few churches (if any) now exist, and as you can see, there never were many holding fast to the faith once delivered to the saints.

The mention of having “*experienced the sifting operation,*” and consequent “*peace and harmony;*” together with the report of three small churches that had just come “*through great tribulation, in endeavoring to free themselves from the yoke of bondage with which they have been entangled,*” brought back to my own mind those trying days in the past that the Lord

dragged my wife, son, and I out of danger's way by a persecuting mob of "dear religious good folks," who hated sovereign grace and we that advocated it.

As a ardent student of church history, having spent over fifty-four years devoted a sizeable amount of research (much in just trying to find the Church that Jesus built,) and realizing the extreme violence the Fullerites treated their opponents as they whipped all "Baptists" into line (their's), burning meeting houses, locking doors, stealing property, and even burning Baltimore in their wild zeal of anti-Christian error, designed to instill fear and control, it surely must have been a great trial of affliction to find ones self having to listen to the garbage of will-worship, and with no place to escape. What a prize for that little handful that finally had elders and men of faith with intestinal fortitude to say: "Here we stand: we cannot recant!" as said Luther, and purged out the leaven of "Means and Measures," and the "wood, hay, and stubble" of dead professional religion. I can imagine how sweet that deliverance must have been, for I've been there!

As I typed these two articles, my mind kept going to a sister in Iowa, to Ohio, to Indiana, to Washington, to Canada, to Arkansas, to Denton (NC) and other places where a few called of God to stand fast in the faith of God's elect, do that with fear and trembling, desiring just a word of comfort now and then : a "crumb from the Mater's table."

Our true enemy today is not so much the over-zealous workmongers of yesteryear, but the complacency of our own, that see no need to be used in God's service to encourage their spiritual brothers and sisters in their lonely pilgrimage. A visit, a phone call, a letter, an e-mail, a gathering together with a very small assembly, all of which is a good work when done to the benefit and comfort of others in God's name, and motivated by His blessed Spirit. An opportunity to gather together for the mutual edification of each other in God's dear family, passed by for a football game, T.V. show, or other worldliness is a crowning source of dryness, deadness, and complacency. One can be "dead while they liveth."

My private thoughts made public, Yours, Stanley C. Phillips