

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

Several years after the event of our text, the apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor, Timothy: **"From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."** (2Tim. 3:15)

As a young child Timothy's mother and grandmother had taught him the Old Testament Scriptures. But Paul says that Timothy had known the Scriptures "from **childhood**" – which means that Timothy never reached an age where he said: "I've read the Scriptures three times. I know it all. I know that Jesus is my Savior." Rather, he continued in his hearing and learning of God's Word, so that he might keep this saving wisdom through the faith that is generated and preserved by the same Word of God.

Paul knew very well how important it is that Christian education be continued throughout life. Near the end of his own life he also wrote to Timothy: **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."** (2Tim. 4:7) In the same letter Paul reminded Timothy: **You must endure hardship as a good soldier of the cross."** (2Tim. 2:3)

What's all this about "fighting the fight of faith," and being a "soldier of the cross"? Are you parents training your children from their youth to be fighters and soldiers of the cross? Is this the purpose of all our education programs at Holy Trinity? Most certainly!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MAKES CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS!

I.

This is no ordinary fight and we are not ordinary soldiers, by any means! We all know that the soldiers of every army are taught to kill the enemy, to kill or be killed! But we must first be killed before we can become Christian soldiers! This is not only the first lesson a truly Christian education teaches, it is a lesson that must be repeated again and again!

Our text tells us that Saul lived and breathed the death of all Christians. He was on his way to Damascus to capture more Christians. He thought he was living his life in the service of God. As a leader among the Pharisees, Saul was convinced that eternal life with God could be

gained through obedience to the Laws and commandments of Moses. Although, he was an **"enemy"** of God because of sin, just as we all are by nature, Saul did not know sin or see it in himself. He felt alive in the law because the Law had not yet sunk its murderous teeth into him.

He was able to hush his conscience like others do With thoughts like this: "I'm doing my best, God will accept me." OR, "that fellow over there is a great sinner compared to me!" OR, "I must be doing something right, since things are going well for me!" For many years Saul sat comfortably in his house of ignorance, like a man who doesn't know that he is sitting on top of a volcano!

But Saul's gracious and merciful Savior chose a special way to really put the fear of God into the man, and begin his Christian education! As you see in the text, Saul was immediately crushed and defeated on the road to Damascus. He had thought that he was alive spiritually and serving God. Instead, he had been waging war against the risen Lord Jesus, the Son of God! Suddenly, the Lord made it clear to Saul's heart that the Law did not save him, but condemned and killed him before the holy God! Later this converted Christian soldier wrote to the Romans: **"When the commandment came (that is when it finally spoke to my heart), then sin revived and I died."** (Rm. 7:8-9)

Have we been killed by the Law, or do we think we are still alive in it? Only if we have been brought to the conviction that the Law constantly shows our sin and our eternal condemnation are we properly killed by the Law. Only then does our Christian education continue, and

II.

we are alive with Saul. So he wrote to the Galatian Christians: **"I through the law died to the law, that I might lie to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me."** (Gal. 2:19-21)

Saul was turned from being an enemy of Christ to become a Christian soldier – a soldier of the cross! He became a different man, known to us as Paul, the Apostle. How did this happen? Some might say that Saul's conversion was so special because he was such a hardened enemy of the Savior, but others can actually cooperate in bringing about their own

conversion because they are not so dead-set against Christ as Saul was.

Many assume that becoming a Christian soldier is like walking into an army recruiting station and signing up for service! But the Scriptures teach otherwise. Paul himself told the Galatians that God revealed His Son to him **“when it pleased God,”** Who had **“called Paul “by His grace.”** (Gal. 1:15-16) So our Lord Jesus says in John 6:44, **“No man can come to Me, except the Father Who sent me, draw him.”**

A ship must be turned by the pilot or the wind. So also we, who are natural-born enemies of God must be turned by the powerful, life-creating breath of the Holy Spirit, Who is ever working through the Word of God. Only when we have been taught by the Law that we can't fool God, and from the Gospel that we don't need to, will we ask as Saul does:

III.

“What shall I do, Lord.” Saul shows what all of Holy Scripture teaches – that true faith is not a dead, do-nothing thing! As soon as Jesus revealed Himself to Saul as his living Savior, Who had loved him and given himself for him, Saul, asks: **“Lord, what do You want me to do?”** (v. 6)

Sometimes we come up with the wrong answer because we ask the wrong question of the wrong person! I knew a young man many years ago who asked himself the question many young people are taught to ask already in high school: “Self, what do you want me to do with my life?”

Of course, “Self” answered selfishly: “You could do one of several things that you enjoy and make plenty of money. Do what you want!”

Then, one day, while quietly thinking about the greatness of his sins, and how the Son of God had loved him and given himself for him, he asked a different question: “Lord, my Savior, what do You want me to do?” His Christian education led him to the seminary for further instructions on how to be a better Christian soldier.

We are not all suited for the preaching and teaching ministry. But every one who has been killed by the Law and made alive again by the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, will ask the question Saul asked. The better our Christian education and the stronger our living faith becomes, the less we will ask, “Self, what would do YOU want me to do,” and the more we will ask, “Lord, what do YOU want me to do?” There is so much he wants us to do in the living of our faith; and there are no unimportant tasks. For

IV.

We have all received the great commission! Paul was educated by Christ to become a Christian soldier who would “fight the good fight of faith” and suffer many things as he devoted himself to bringing the Gospel of Christ to both Gentile and Jew. Soldiers receive commissions from their leaders. Our **Christian education has made us Christian soldiers.** The Captain of our faith has given us this great commission: **“Be going and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”** (Mt. 28:18-20)

Are we seriously involved with the fight our fellow soldiers are making in this congregation, or are we content to let others carry on the battle for souls, and not get too involved? When we get hurt, do we run from the battlefield and leave our Christian comrades to fight without us? Do we let SELF tell us what to do with our time, talents, and riches, or do we ask “Lord, what would YOU have me do? Are we becoming more effective witnesses for Christ by our personal Bible study, church, Bible Class, and Sunday School attendance?

Our great commission as Christian soldiers is about teaching, living, and confessing His Word faithfully, so that the message of salvation may be clear and preserved for ourselves, our children, and the world. It’s about surrendering SELF to the LORD “Who loved us and gave Himself for us.” It’s about denying SELF by enduring all things for Him Who suffered the agony of hell for us!

Examine yourselves. If you are receiving a Christian education, then like Saul, your Lord has opened your blind eyes so that you have been made a Christian soldier! He has already gained the victory for you over sin, death, and hell. Now He promises you all His riches in heaven, if only you will fight in faith alongside Him on earth! Amen.