



### Scripture Nugget – Are we blind to our self-righteousness?

*On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are You, Sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank (Acts 9:3-9).*

**Does the self-righteousness of Saul resonate in us?** The temptation to self-righteousness is cunningly used by Satan to trip souls who are trying to grow in holiness. Satan leverages on our weak human inclination to unfairly judge others while oblivious to our own faults. Self-righteousness is fed by pride which may not be apparent. Saul, who became Paul after his conversion, carried his sinful self-righteousness to extremes when he caused many early Christians to be persecuted. His zeal and courage were wrongly used to this wicked end. He could hardly see the wrong he was doing. This is a human weakness Christ warned us: *Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3).* Whilst we may not take our self-righteousness to its terrible extremes like Saul, nevertheless, such attitude if not corrected by ourselves can lead to imposing our subjective opinion on weaker others, doggedly defending it irrespective of the truth, refusal to take correction from or listen to others, and a judgemental mind that dwells on the perceived faults of others. All these can lead us to give false witness to Christ without us even being aware of it! Unbridled self-righteousness can lead to great evil as is also shown by the murderous intent of the scribes and Pharisees towards our Lord.

**The antidote for self-righteousness: Humility and penance.** After Saul was struck blind by bright light on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, and divine enlightenment was given to him regarding his sins, he repented and humbled himself by fasting from food and water for three days. Self-righteousness no longer had a hold over him. From the great depths of sin that Saul fell into, he was able, through the grace of God, to ascend to great heights of sanctity and achieved works of evangelization unparalleled by other saints. With his heart, mind and attitude corrected by enlightenment and strengthened by penance with sincere repentance, St Paul's great zeal and courage were gainfully harnessed for winning great multitude of souls for God's glorious Kingdom.

**Conversation with Jesus.** Precious Lord, St Paul is a good example of what You can do to transform sinful souls even those that fell to great depths of sin. Help me exercise the spiritual discipline of humility and penance. Purify my heart of pride, self-righteousness, falsehoods and deception. Fill it with humility, simplicity and a genuine concern for others. Give me the wisdom of St Paul who said that everything is worthless compared to the infinite value of knowing You, and that he considered all things as garbage so that he could gain You (cf. Philippians 3:8). Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.