Speaking to the soul

God's forgiveness

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. Psalm 51:1-2

The background to this psalm is well known. King David had committed adultery and had been found out. The penalty for

this crime in the Jewish law was death. However, David repented of his sin and God showed him generosity in forgiving his wrongdoing. This psalm is both a celebration of God's forgiveness and of the new life which opened up for David as a result.

The evil one will always seek to persuade us that sin is not actually all that serious. Everyone does it and we really shouldn't beat ourselves up about it. And, in any event, the sins which other people commit are far worse than anything we would ever think of doing ourselves. Just look at some of the stories in today's newspapers. We know that we would never do any of the awful things that we read about. In these, and a thousand other ways, we seek to excuse our sins. But the truth is that sin always destroys. And there is no such thing as a little sin, or an excusable sin, just sin. All sin damages us and blocks our relationship with God.

You might read about David's sins in 2 Samuel 11 and feel good about yourself because you have never sunk to the depths of committing adultery and then organising the murder of your lover's husband. However, the truth is that we have all sinned and as the apostle Paul wrote: "we all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23). We should recognise that today's psalm is directly relevant to our own lives, as each one of us needs God's gift of forgiveness. Let us come to God and ask him to create in us a pure heart and then spread the word about God's forgiveness, because everyone needs it.

QUESTION
What has been your own experience of God's forgiveness?

PRAYER

Lord God, I confess that I have sinned against you. Help me to receive your gift of forgiveness with joy and, in the power of your Spirit, to live a new life. Amen

Photograph - near Slemish, County Antrim