

## A healing touch: Psalm 51.1-4

*Another short reflection from the Thy Kingdom Come website*

*Psalm 51:1-4 (NIV)*

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.



Yesterday we thought a little about the language of sin and the mess in our lives (caused by ourselves and by others). As we look today at the most famous of all the ‘sorry’ psalms, it is worth considering what it means to say sorry to God, and how we might weave that into our prayer for those we long to come to Jesus.

This psalm is traditionally ascribed to King David repenting of his behaviour with Bathsheba. It is a passionate prayer, which holds nothing back from God: *Against you... have I sinned... so you are right in your verdict*. Painfully honest, it is a personal exposé of the truth.

Remarkably, though the writer knows that God would be just in returning a guilty verdict, the psalm begins with an appeal to an even more important truth, that God is compassionate and merciful. It is saying in effect, ‘I deserve to be punished, but you are a forgiving God.’ So to say sorry to God is to tell the painful truth about ourselves, trusting that God will administer a healing touch, not a death blow.

We can apply this truth to the lives of those for whom we pray

by asking God to make himself known to them, so that they will experience his compassionate love for themselves. But you might also like to pray the 'Jesus Prayer' on their behalf, inserting their name: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on ..... , a sinner.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner;*

*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on ....., a sinner like me.*