

SNARLING DOGS

Thursday, April 26

Reading: Psalm 59

Psalm 59:6 *They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city.* **7** *See what they spew from their mouths— the words from their lips are sharp as swords, and they think, "Who can hear us?"* **8** *But you laugh at them, LORD; you scoff at all those nations.* **9** *You are my strength, I watch for you; you, God, are my fortress,* **10** *my God on whom I can rely.*

By the heading we see that this is the first of David's "fugitive psalms." For years he had served faithfully under King Saul and led the Israelite armies to many victories. But his popularity among the people caused the disobedient king to become jealous. After several attempts to eliminate David failed, Saul gave the order for his henchmen to kill David at his home. However David's wife, Saul's daughter, helps David escape (1 Samuel 18-19). For the next decade, David will be a hunted fugitive.

In Psalm 59, David describes his pursuers as "snarling like dogs" (59:6-7; 14-15). In ancient times, dogs were not household pets like today. Some were used as watchdogs, like a shepherd might have. But this image is of a pack of wild dogs who roam the city digging in the garbage looking for food. These were dangerous animals. When you heard their howl in the street it was best to avoid them. This is how David pictures his enemies. Their actions are vicious (59:2-3) and they spew slander and wickedness from their mouths like deadly swords (59:7, 10). They are so arrogant that they believe that not even God can hear or punish them (59:7b-8, 12).

When we consider this description, it makes me think of how we use words today. Words become weapons much easier today. With e-mail, twitter, texting, etc. we can spew gossip and verbal attacks without having to see how our words hurt others. We don't have to look into their eyes and see their pain. We often do so without even thinking about the consequences.

The Bible has a lot to say about our words. Jesus gives a stern warning in Matthew 12. He reminds us that our words reveal what is in our hearts (12:34) and then gives a sobering message:

36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.
37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

David counters these "snarling dogs" with words of praise to the Lord (59:16-17). He knows that his enemies will not have the last word. He can rely on the strength and love of God to get him through. When our hearts are filled with praise and adoration for the Lord, our mouths will speak what is right.

THRU THE BIBLE Reading: 1 Samuel 19-21; John 16