



August 12, 2020: Thoughts on the Bible text

Foto: P. Johanning

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4: 12).

The Bible text for today’s devotional comes from the epistle to the Hebrews, the author of which is unknown. It is assumed the letter was written around ad 90 and thus belongs to the later writings of the New Testament. The word of God can be found in Holy Scripture and is also proclaimed today. In our Bible text it is compared to a sword which at face value seems quite an aggressive and perhaps even violent comparison.

A double-edged sword can be used in all directions and does not have to be turned like a single-edged sword, because both sides of the sword blade can cut equally. The author of the epistle emphasizes that the word of God is even sharper than a double-edged sword, as it penetrates deeper than any blade and therefore does more than the human weapon can do.

The verse needs to be read carefully to understand that although the word of God is described in terms of a weapon, the description of it is not in the destructive sense, but rather that the word of God cuts through to the true nature of humankind to reveal them as they really are.

The Word: alive and powerful

The word of God is a living word and even though it is ancient it remains current because it is proclaimed today and remains effective. It speaks to us in our own specific circumstances to the point that we sometimes ask ourselves how was that possible. What's more, the word of God also creates life. Whoever accepts it and lives according to it (!) will attain eternal life!

When the author of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the word of God being full of power, he is clearly thinking of the effects it has. God's word is, for example, creative in that God created everything through His Word. It was through the Word that Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. Also, through the Word, sins are forgiven, and salvation is granted. The Word: sharp and piercing The sharpness of the word of God is shown, among other things, by the fact that it clearly teaches to distinguish good from evil and truth from lie. When people talk to each other, words serve to gloss over or hide something; the word of God, however, reveals what is unpleasant, disturbing, and evil.

It should lead us to assess ourselves properly and thus not to be subject to our own self-deception. When the word of God pierces us, it means that we are filled with it and live both from it and according to it.

The Word: discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart

When the word of God pierces us, it becomes clear to us what dominates our thoughts and what the motives are behind our wishes. We realise that we do not always act and plan in the Spirit of God and through the Word are given the chance to change. Our weaknesses are revealed, and we are warned against taking the wrong path—but above all we are pointed to the path of Christ, which leads to eternal life. God only wants salvation for us human beings (1 Timothy 2: 4; John 3: 17), and through His Word He works unceasingly and with patience towards this goal, until the time of grace is over.

12 August 2020