

1 Timothy 2: The Front End of the Minefield

Four Ways to Navigate a Minefield

- Option 1: To take some of Paul as more important than the other bits of Paul and read as if he didn't mean one half of it
- Option 2: To take some of Paul as “spiritual” and some as “doctrinal” or “prescriptive”
- Option 3: To postulate that Paul didn't really write some of it
- Option 4: To assume that Paul wrote and meant both 1 Timothy 2 and Galatians 3 and use the tools of good interpretation to see how they fit together
- The *Christian Standard* (available just outside our sanctuary) is actually doing a series on these questions starting on August 17.
- *Every congregation* and *every tradition* has this chapter in the Bible.
- The question is not who reads the text but how a congregation will interpret it.

Getting to the Minefield

- Verses 1-4: a meditation on prayer for those not among us; wraps up with a statement that should be more controversial than the chapter's end
- Verses 5-8: a meditation regarding the salvation that Jesus has brought and Paul's mission inside of the scheme of salvation; the paragraphing in many translations is screwy at this point; they make verse eight part of the next section rather than an extension of this thought

The Minefield

- Verses 9-10: a dress code for all time, a principle for life, something historically particular, or a complex mixture of the above?
- Verses 11-12: a prohibition on women teachers for all time, a principle for church organization, something historically particular, or a complex mixture of the above?
- Verses 13-15: How should Genesis 1 relate to Genesis 2? Was Adam not standing right there when this was going on? What pronouns do our translations use in verse 15?

Some Minefield Greek Words

- ησυχιον *esykion* (verses 2, 11, and 12): Has a range of connotations from silence to peacefulness
- αυθεντειν *authenthein* (verse 11): Has a range of connotations from domineer to exercise formal authority
- της *tes* (verse 15): A singular pronoun that does not match the plural verb “abide/remain”

The Implications

- Whatever else we say, we should treat verses like 2:4 as seriously as we do 2:12.
- Whatever else we say, we should treat the Bible as a collection of documents that we must take seriously as sacred Scripture.
- Whatever else we say, we should avoid easy dichotomies like “Bible” and “culture” and actually engage the Greek text and the Roman context and our own pretexts.
- Whatever else we say, we should acknowledge our tradition's congregational system of church government and take that as an opportunity to speak with others who practice differently, not for the sake of “getting along” alone but to explore the embodied end of this interpretive debate.
- Whatever else we say, we should acknowledge that concrete decisions about who our preachers and teachers are going to be are certainly related to but not identical with Paul's text.