

1 Timothy 4: More Advice for *Diakonoi*

Reviewing the Territory

- On either side of the minefield that is 1 Timothy 2:9-3:13 are instructions concerning prayer and Christian life
- The minefield itself seems to partake in that teaching aim
- The dilemmas that come from being real people who live in real places

Accepting what is not Rejected: 1 Timothy 4:1-5

- How seriously does Paul take whatever is happening in verses 1 and 2? What in the text lets you know how seriously he takes it?
- What is the offending teaching (verse 3)? Why might Paul hold such teachings to be so dangerous as to call them diabolic?
- To what extent is Paul being hyperbolic in verses 4 and 5? Are there things in the world that we can imagine advising against, even if the consumer prayed over them first?
 - Before you start thinking that hyperbole doesn't belong in the Bible, remember that we're looking at an ancient document and that ancient Christians assumed that there would be *episkopoi* (remember chapter 3?) who could guide neophytes (chapter 3 again) through such moral dilemmas.

Training for Service: 1 Timothy 4:6-10

- Verse six uses the same *diakonos* word that we talked about in chapter 3. Compare translations on verse 7—what exactly are we not supposed to listen to? What might be some examples of our time's *mythoi*?
- What kinds of training does Paul hold up in verses 8 and 9? What would constitute the latter sort of training?
- Why doesn't anyone ever pay attention to verse 10? Ah, yes. They're still fighting over 2:-15.

The Young Teacher: 1 Timothy 4:11-16

- To what does the word “these” refer?
- What are Timothy's duties in verse 13? How does it hook up with his gift in verse 14? What do you think “prophecy” means here? (Incidentally, in verse 14 we finally get elders.)
- How is the teaching in verse 16 related to the prophecy in verse 14?

Implications

- Whatever else we say, we should think hard about the concrete phenomena in our world that might stand as temptations and the real danger of making prudence into a straitjacket.
- Whatever else we say, we should avoid reductionist oppositions of “Bible” and “culture.”
- Whatever else we say, we should remember that divine gifts do not always fall on the old, even if our tradition's congregations' governors are “old men” (*elders/presbyteroi*).
- Whatever else we say, we should take teaching in the church seriously.