

FIRST TIMOTHY SERIES: WHEN TRUTH IS ATTACKED

PART 6C: FAULTLESS FIGHT

Good morning CVCHURCH! If you're a guest, welcome home! **[Show Service]** Today is Service Sunday. The service purpose (or the 'ministry' or the 'give' purpose) means to express our devotion to Jesus by serving others. Service is one of our **5 purposes: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Service, and Evangelism**. We focus on one per week, and each time we cycle through them, we use different words so that Jesus can grow them in us. Service comes from **Matthew 22:39-40 – The Most Important Commandment – 39 “A second [commandment] is equally important [as loving God]: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”** Service means using all of our gifts and resources to meet real needs, to bring healing and hope to those who need it, and to demonstrate tangible compassion in the name of Jesus. Service is love in action. It's **the visible evidence of our invisible devotion**. It's 'equally important' as loving God because genuine love for Jesus only exists paired with active love for people whom Jesus died to rescue. At the end today we'll celebrate a model servant of Jesus. **[Show 1st Timothy]** It's through the lens of this service purpose that we view God's Word today in our series WHEN TRUTH IS ATTACKED. Paul encourages us, via his understudy Timothy, to act decisively in order to protect our total devotion to Jesus and our complete commitment to His glorious return. Listen to any of our prior teachings in this series on our **YouTube & Facebook @cvchurchla** or our **website cvchurch.com**. Let's pray: *Jesus, we declare that we're Your servants. Grow us into men and women of God. Build in us the decisiveness to flee from all corruption and to fiercely pursue Your six virtues: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Train us for Your faultless fight. We remember the day we confessed You as King. On that day, You made us faultless. Sustain us until Your triumphant return, King Jesus. Amen.*

Follow me in your notes as I read our 1st passage for today. As I read, ask yourself: **How can I apply the Apostle Paul's encouragement for the faultless fight?** This will allow the Spirit to speak to us about defending the truth when the truth is attacked. Follow me in **1st Timothy 6:11-12 – Paul's Final Instructions – 11But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 12Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses.** To defend the truth when truth is attacked, see yourself as a faultless fighter for Jesus, like the Apostle Paul and his protégé Timothy. Here's your 1st fill-in: **I. STAND DECISIVELY FOR JESUS, and part A. FLEE from CORRUPTION.** This powerful passage encourages us in our battle for the truth. Paul draws a stark contrast between the purity and faithfulness of Timothy and the greed and lies of the false elder leaders and teachers in Ephesus. Listen again as I combine the ending from last week (v10) with the opening of this week (v11) **1st Timothy 6:10-11 – 10For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. 11But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things.** For those new to our series, the key to understanding this passage is the historical context. **[Show Disruption]** The Apostle Paul, far away in Macedonia, writes

to his protégé Timothy in Ephesus to root out the corruption plaguing the Ephesian church which Paul had spent years establishing. Before Paul left, he challenged the elder leaders of that church that some were really wolves in sheep's clothing. Paul's prophecy sadly came true. These wolves, these false teachers, were preying upon—and were funded by—lazy, gossiping, meddling, younger widows. These false leaders and widows together were destroying the various home churches—for money! Timothy is there on Paul's and Jesus' behalf to clean up a mess he didn't make. Where have you been called to finish a fight you didn't start? Jesus sends His ambassadors, His prayer warriors, into tough situations to represent His light in the darkness. Next, **B. BATTLE for ETERNITY.** American professor and scholar, Ben Witherington III, says, **“Paul well knows the difficulty of being a Christian in a hostile world. It requires constant intent and effort. Indeed, it is a struggle, so he uses the language of the ... Olympic contest, but to refer to a moral struggle ... he says, ‘Contest the good contest’ a phrase that we have seen hints of earlier (back in Chapter 1) and will see again (in 2nd Timothy Ch4). There is a prize in this contest, and it is eternal life. It is seen here as a goal that in part may be seized now. It is this goal to which Timothy was called when he confessed the good confession. Notice the deliberate rhetorical redundancy for emphasis (‘contest the contest,’ ‘confess the confession’). This confession took place before many witnesses.”** Do you know when to flee and when to fight? It's impossible to know without the Holy Spirit. Where are you engaging our culture? We must have the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to know when to turn and run, and when to stand and fight. Paul says that we do both at the same time: flee from lies, evil, and corruption, and stand and fight for Jesus' truth, good, and integrity. Paul urges flight plus engagement. The late American scholar Thomas Oden adds: **“Does Christian ministry characteristically take the offensive, or hold to a distancing or defensive posture? Paul began with the distancing theme: ‘But as for you, man of God, shun all this’ (v11). Keep clear of fruitless squabbles. Put as much distance as you can between yourself and avaricious, double-talking troublemakers, who harm all who come near. The idea is to run, not walk, away from trouble. Then the offensive: Run to righteousness, a quality rightly descriptive of God's own character. ‘Both expressions are emphatic; he does not say turn from one, and approach the other, but ‘flee these things, pursue righteousness’ (John Chrysostom). Amid persecution, reviling, and provocation, the one committed to share in God's own ministry to the world must keep a steady course, rendering good for evil, blessing for cursing, overcoming evil with good—this is the good fight (v12). Do not back away from the contest when the moment for engagement comes. ‘There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations, and the opposition of the powers of darkness. Observe, it is a good fight, it is a good cause, and it will have a good issue’ (Matthew Henry). The battle is costly but worth one's total energies and commitment.”** How must you separate from the destructive paths of others? How must you contend for Jesus? Paul urges us to battle for 6 eternal virtues in 3 categories: **our relationship with Jesus (godliness, righteousness); Jesus' core principles (faith, love); and our actions toward an unbelieving world (steadfastness, gentleness).** Do you engage in spiritual warfare in Jesus' name? Paul commands us to ‘fight the good fight of faith’ and ‘take hold of the eternal life to which we are called’. Do you train for eternity? Paul's athletic metaphor likens ministry service to a struggle or a contest ‘in the midst of severe opposition.’ Like a trained competitive athlete, we must vigorously put Jesus' revealed truth into action.

Flip back to our 2nd passage, **1st Timothy 6:13-16** – ¹³**And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. ¹⁵For, ‘At just the right time Christ will be revealed from Heaven by the blessed and only Almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. ¹⁶He alone can never die, and He lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach Him. No human eye has ever seen Him, nor ever will. All honor and power to Him forever! Amen.’** In our first passage, Paul urges us to discern when to take flight and when to stand and fight. Here he commissions us to speak boldly as witnesses to the truth of Jesus and to live waiting expectantly for His return. Fill-in: **II. SERVE JESUS WITHOUT WAVERING**, and part **A. UPHOLD Jesus’ TESTIMONY**. Was Timothy discouraged by what he faced in the Ephesian church from those false elder leaders and widows? Historian and professor George R. Knight says, **“Three things stand out about Timothy: 1) He had a strong religious heritage in his own family, Biblical training from his youth, and a strong commendation already as a young man, both his own congregation at Lystra and the neighboring congregation at Iconium (see 2nd Timothy & Acts). 2) He was a faithful and consistent coworker and assistant to Paul, who regarded Timothy as one of his most trustworthy and dedicated associates and one to whom he could assign difficult tasks (Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Corinth). 3) Equally striking is Timothy’s apparent timidity and need for encouragement [e.g. in 2nd Timothy]: ‘God has not given us a spirit of timidity,’ ‘do not be ashamed,’ ‘be strong,’ ‘suffer hardship,’ [and in 1st Timothy]: ‘let no one look down on your youthfulness,’ ‘do not neglect the spiritual gift,’ ‘pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching,’ ‘guard what has been entrusted to you.’ Timothy’s timidity (and thus his need for encouragement) may have stemmed from a realistic appraisal of a difficult situation, from a natural propensity, or from both. Paul addresses Timothy as his spiritual son. That is, Paul writes to the younger man as his own spiritual convert, as one he has spiritually nurtured, and as one who serves under him as a son serves his father.”** Where are you discouraged or timid? Don’t let it stop you! Paul encourages Timothy by reminding him of his public testimony at his commissioning into service and comparing it to Jesus’ testimony before Roman governor Pontius Pilate where Jesus willingly chooses death rather than waver from the truth. In all four Gospels, Jesus affirms and redefines His Kingship before Pilate. **[Show Jesus Pilate]** Our King is not of this world. Paul urges Timothy, and us, to uphold Jesus’ unwavering testimony to His identity and mission, even in the face of suffering or death. Where do waver? How do you struggle to obey Jesus? Ask Him for courage! He gave it to Timothy; He’ll give it to you! His unwavering witness becomes yours! He’s Who makes our fight faultless. What faults do you struggle with? Surrender them to Jesus. Paul calls us to personal integrity because, as we’ve seen throughout 1st Timothy, he connects our beliefs to our behavior. Do your behaviors align with your beliefs? If not, turn to Jesus. Confess them. Receive His forgiveness! Our last fill-in: **B. EXPECT Jesus’ RETURN**. Paul’s final charge points to the end times when Jesus will return in His glory. This is our hope: that Jesus is returning. Do you live with this urgency? If not, turn to Him before it’s too late. He’s the ultimate authority, the supreme power, and at the right time, everyone will see Him as the King of kings and the Lord of lords Who alone has eternity in His hands and dwells in unimaginable light. This is the Jesus we serve! Where do you face opposition or even suffering? Ask for help and prayer. He

sees you, just like Paul sees Timothy, as His beloved. Where are you faltering? Ask Him and He'll provide. We endure because we know Jesus will rescue us from every evil attack and will bring us safely into His Heavenly Kingdom. He sustains our faultless fight with His promise that if we know Him, we will stand blameless when He returns. On this Service Sunday, we celebrate one of our faultless fighters for Jesus: Beth Krausse.

[Show Beth] Beth is a model for all we've been talking about today. She's stood decisively for Jesus, and she's served Him without wavering for 25 years in our Kids' Place ministry. 3 weeks ago, she received her 25-year pastoral commendation from our denominational leaders at our Foursquare Leadership Conference. Let's watch: **[Show 25-Year Video]** **[Present Beth's Plaque]** **[Celebrate Kids' Costumes]** If you're here, or online, and you want to follow Beth's, Paul's, and Timothy's examples serving in Jesus' faultless fight for His Gospel, say this prayer: *Savior Jesus, we confess our sins and faults to You. We receive Your forgiveness, and we choose to follow You as our Lord and King. We flee the corruption of this world and choose today to pursue You and Your Kingdom. Give us Your strength, faith, and love to stand decisively and serve without wavering. Strengthen us by Your Spirit to fight the battle for eternity and fulfill Your call on our lives. We commit to upholding Your testimony until You return, Jesus. Amen.* If you prayed that, please write it on your Friends Card or see me out back after. We exist for you to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus, and one way you can do this on Service Sunday is to start discovering your unique service for Jesus through our **Life Development Seminars** coming soon **Sunday, November 23rd, 1-5pm, lunch and childcare included.** A great group already has RSVPd to learn about **Membership (LD101), Maturity (LD201), Ministry (LD301), and Mission (LD401).** We'd love to have you to participate! RSVP on your friends card or email info@cvchurch.com and here's Kathe to close.