

Titus010103-110611  
Bridge of Hope  
November 6, 2011

“The Time Is Now To Run!”

Introduction: Good morning! My name is David and I serve as the Lead Pastor here at Bridge of Hope. We are so glad that you all have come to worship Jesus Christ today!

Let's get started with our message for this time of worship. **Titus 1:1-3 (NLT)** *This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have been sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives. **This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God—who does not lie—promised them before the world began. And now at just the right time he has revealed this message, which we announce to everyone. It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been entrusted with this work for him.***

Bridge of Hope, “The Time Is Now!” Last week we discovered that “The Time is Now to Go!” You can find the notes from the message on our website. Today we want to turn our attention to the subject of running. The time is now for us to run. To run means to move at a faster pace than walking. It is to move quickly. As you run there are actual moments when both feet are in mid-air and you take flight. The reality is when you run you can cover much more ground in a much shorter amount of time. It is also true that to run means you will expend a lot more energy. Running is about moving at a more rapid pace. It has at its core the thought or feeling of urgency. We run because we want or need to get there quicker, we feel an urgency.

As I have prayed and prepared for this series I have felt an urgency in my soul. Why such an urgency? All I know is that I feel it in my soul even now. We need to move with such a heart as we join in the race. Some may have run in the race before and maybe didn't make it. Don't let that stop you from entering the race today. In this season, Jesus has specifically prepared you for this race. And you can run it to the level that He has made you ready.

## THE TIME IS NOW TO RUN . . . .

- **THE RACE MARKED OUT FOR YOU.**
  1. **Some people love to run, they love to compete in a race.**
    - I have to admit that sometimes I wonder about these people who really like running.
    - Running has never been about fun for me, it was work and hard work at that. So I am not an expert of running races, most of the time when I did race, I lost.
    - Here is what I do know about people who like to run in competition, they are usually a pretty disciplined bunch of people.
    - They understand the importance of being in the right place at the right time and doing the right thing when you get there.
  2. **The Bible says this about running, we read in **Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance **the race marked out for us.** Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at***

*the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

3. This is about running a race that has been marked out for you to follow.
  - More specifically, it is about running the race Jesus has marked out for you.
  - It's not just any race, this is a race that God has chosen for you to compete in.
  - Knowing the race and following what has been marked out can make the difference between completing and quitting.
4. How do we run the race that is marked out for us?
  - According to Hebrews we do it by fixing our eyes on Jesus.
  - He is the one who sets the course and will guide you through it.
  - You just have to learn to trust Him and listen to what He says to you through the Holy Spirit who is sent to be your guide.
  - When He says to go to the inside of the track, you go to the inside.
  - When the Holy Spirit says to back off a little, you listen and back off from the pack.
  - Do you get the idea?
5. So how do we know what God has marked out for us to run?
  - For starters, I think you ask Him to show you.
  - Then you pay attention to what He says to you. Listen to the Holy Spirit.
  - And then you start looking for the various markers He puts along your path.
  - Markers such as the things He speaks to you through prayer, scripture, life circumstances, and other people you meet.
  - It isn't really rocket science, but it does require getting to know Jesus.
6. The time is now to run the race that has been marked out for you so you can complete the competition and get where Jesus wants you to be.
7. The time is now to run . . . .

- **WITH PERSEVERANCE.**

1. To run with perseverance is to run with a steady persistence and purpose on the course that has been marked out for you.
  - This is especially true when you are running through obstacles, difficulties, and discouragement.
  - Perseverance is about enduring to the end and completing the course.
  - It is about recognizing the truth of the circumstances around you, but not letting those circumstances determine if you are going to finish the race.
2. Jesus says to us again in **Hebrews 12:1-3** (NIV) *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and **let us run with perseverance** the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him **endured** the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who **endured** such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*
3. When we read something like this in scripture we need to know that the race isn't going to always be easy.
  - Like running a marathon, there will come a point where your body begins to cramp up and you are winded and you think you can't take another step.
  - As they say, you hit the wall!
  - Those who run with perseverance find a way to keep going.
  - They endure just like Jesus endured.
4. To run with perseverance you have to train.

- The conditioning you went through will determine if you can push through to the end.
- This is where those times when you wanted to take the short cut or stop all together, but didn't, pays off.
- This is the place where the things you did to make you better when no one else was watching pays dividends.
- Running this race is about the character we develop in our lives that carries us through the difficulties as we hit the wall and feel like quitting.
- It is here in the place of perseverance where the mental toughness was created in you and now that mental toughness gets you through.

5. Running with endurance in life is developed . . .

- through worship giving you perseverance. It is both a daily habit of private worship and the weekly habit of worshipping together with others as a people of praise.
- in us through times of service to others when you could have been doing something for yourself. It is about His mission as we share the Gospel with all.
- because you resisted the temptation to go alone and joined with others in community so that you could be coached and challenged and encouraged along the way.
- by the habits of your walk with Christ and those habits help you in the midst of difficult moments when things seem to be coming against you.

6. The time is now to run with perseverance the race marked out for you so that you don't falter and quit and find yourself coming up short of what Jesus wants for you.

7. The time is now to run . . . .

● TO WIN.

1. Now I have to admit something to you today, I do not like to lose, no sir . . . no way . . . no how. And further more, I do not understand the purpose of doing something if you don't plan on succeeding at doing it.

- Back in the day some good Christian people came out with this game and they called it the Ungame and in this game nobody won, they just played.
- That game never appealed to me, I could never understand why you would want to play a game that nobody could win.
- I have learned to channel my competitive nature to productive ways of expressing it. That is a good thing, I think.
- Ok, now that I have confessed this to you we can go on.

2. The truth is that we live in a world that tries it's best to make everyone a winner or even remove winning as an objective all-together.

- I'm not saying that when kids are playing together that it should always be a competition because sometimes it is just good to play and I know that.
- But our world wants so bad to make everyone equal that they sometimes go overboard and try to make everyone winners when they really aren't.
- Face it, some people are better than others at certain tasks and they usually win.

3. Another truth is that people like winners.

- They like to follow winners.
- They like to hang out with winners.
- Seriously, it's amazing when a sports team gets winning how many fans all of sudden appear.
- Let a local business begin to make it big and all of sudden everybody knows the guy and has a claim in their success.
- People like to be around winners because winning is contagious.

4. Have you ever noticed how the winning attitude of one person can affect the attitudes of all the others around them?
  - Especially when that person has developed the character found in perseverance.
  - We like to be around winners because winners help us become better.
  - It raises our game right along with them.
  - And when someone who is the underdog all of sudden wins . . . wow, we go nuts over them.
5. Listen to the way Paul talks about this in **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** (NIV) *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way as to get the prize.** Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*
6. What do we win? Paul says to get a crown that will last forever. That crown will be realized in this world with things like . . .
  - gaining the opportunity to share what is most important in our life with those who have not come into relationship with Jesus.
  - living rightly so the righteousness of Jesus can be seen in us.
  - having other people who run the race with us.
  - overcoming sin in our life.
  - removing hopelessness from our life as we discover the hope of glory, Jesus Christ.
7. It is time to live counter to our culture and develop the attitude of winning.
  - Not the arrogant, I'm better because I win attitude, but the "come on we can do it attitude".
  - Do you understand this?
  - The world has watched and gotten enough of the "we are better than you" view of Christianity.
  - Now I know none of us in this room ever give off such an attitude, but there are some who do more than enough for all of us. (somewhat sarcastically said)
  - We need people who are so fixed on Jesus that it changes them.
  - It causes them to go from it can't be done to it can be done if it is the will of God.
8. The time is now to run to win through perseverance the race marked out for us.

Conclusion: The fact is we were running a pretty good race before. Things were going well and we running with perseverance. But then something happened and I'm not exactly sure what it was. Maybe it is different things for different people. It just seemed as if people started giving up and they stopped running the race. They seemed to have lost hope. At the least they were no longer focused or believed like they once did before. Paul said this to the Galatians; *"You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."* **Galatians 5:7-9** (NIV)

The Galatians had allowed a legalistic spirit or heart to cut in on them in their race of serving and following Jesus. People who wanted to make them Jews rather than Christians. And this was causing some to fall out of the race because they were discouraged. We can do that sometimes even with good things like our discipleship process. Sometimes in our zealotness we unintentionally discourage others. Let me take a moment and share what I am thinking.

For the last several years we have really encouraged the people of Bridge of Hope to engage in all 3 parts of our discipleship process; worship, small groups, and mission. We are excited about what it can bring to our lives. To some our comments may have been restrictive or forced making it feel legalistic at times. I am sorry if this has been the case. It has never been our heart for this thought. We simply want each member of this family to thrive in all that God calls them to. Let's not do what the Galatians did.

Here is what I believe Jesus is saying to us in this season. Take a good look at your life and if you find that you have dropped out of the race or are running it at your own leisure then you need to figure out who or what it is that has cut in on you. Change the course of your life and get back in the race. Begin the search of your heart and life and see where you are at right now. Are you running the race marked out for you? Are you running with perseverance? Are you running to win? Take the next several moments as we serve communion and see what the Holy Spirit might reveal to you.

(Serve Communion)

The time is now to identify what it is that has changed your ability and willingness to run the race marked out for you and get back in the race. Remove the obstacle that interrupts your view of Jesus and get running at His instruction. Yeah, you heard me . . . it's time to get back in the race and run it to win. It doesn't matter if it is the current recession, your job, sin that has entangled you, or even the discipleship process of Bridge of Hope. Just get back in the race!!

How? Simply ask Jesus to forgive you, deal with the problem, get your view on Jesus, and get back into the competition. It might take you a few moments, it may take days, weeks, or months, but get back into the race marked out for you.

(Bread – Pray)  
(Wine – Pray)

Run like the wind! Run with the horses! Run with perseverance that refuses to quit!

Let's run the race marked out for us with a heart of perseverance and an attitude that says we can and will win. The time is now to run!

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We want to remind our guests that we have a gift we would love to share with you. After you finish your time of worship take a moment to stop by the Guest Table in the Connection Center and you can pick up your gift there.