

# Joshua 21 | Tom Grass

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Preacher: Tom Grass

[ 0 : 00 ] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. There's a lot going on, to say the least, in our worlds.

Worlds. Worlds. In our personal lives, I'm sure, right? What a strange couple of months it's been. And today's theme would be faithfulness of the Lord.

And as you think of Joshua, and we're nearing the end, they've possessed the land, they've conquered enemies, and we're in Joshua chapter 21, and they're possessing all the land that the Lord had promised them.

And there's some debate about how much was promised them, but let's take the word at face value and say that that portion of fulfillment of what God intended at that time was fulfilled.

I think that's safe to say. Wouldn't you think that would be appropriate? I think we can say that it is. I don't know about you, but for me, the last... Since about March 11th, things have pretty much been turned upside down in my world in a variety of ways.

[ 1 : 16 ] And yet, you know, God's been faithful through it all. And what happened March 11th was that I knew, like, this COVID-19 thing was coming to America and had some realizations about it, and then there's been all this back and forth about the seriousness of it.

Is it a virus? This and that. But regardless of where you stand with all that, it was approached with caution or maybe overreaction as we look back and things like that.

And, of course, if you start down this path, there's no end to this conversation, right? Needless to say, at work, it's been like, okay, we're going to reduce staff, 32-hour schedule.

Okay, so I'm working on a 32-hour schedule for 25, 30 employees. Then the next... All of a sudden, it's no Monday. We're starting a furlough schedule. Figure out who's furloughed. It's like, okay, what does that mean?

I mean, I had to look the word up. Honestly, I didn't know what it meant. Honest. 59 years old, I did not know what that word meant. I heard it. It means that you lay people off with...

[ 2 : 17 ] They keep their job. They have their benefits. They have a job to come back to versus being let go. Oh, okay. That's nice, I guess. All that to say, so then you make another schedule.

Well, then you make a schedule, and some of those people on that schedule are fearful or take advantage of the money the government's offering and say, I don't want to work during this time.

Well, now you've got to change the schedule again. You know, on and on and on it goes. Then we're coming back to a 32-hour week.

Okay. Now we have too much business. We have to do a 40-hour week. It's like, what the heck is going on, you know? And the whole time it's been pressure, pressure, pressure. You know, get things done.

Be safe. Extra cleaning schedules. And all that to say. And then, you know, of course, then you've got everything else going on in the world around you, outside the political world. But through it all, God's faithful. And I think in my own life, I find that that's been true.

I'm not sure, like, in this message, you know, to take it personal or just look at the Bible and say, this is what God says, you know. And so I think I'm going to mix it up a little bit with both and maybe a little testimony in the middle or something like that at the end.

[ 3 : 20 ] So anyway, turn your Bibles, if you haven't already, and we'll read these three verses. I also thought this would be a great opportunity for me to do a Zoom message. Three verses and out.

Well, you know, I haven't had a chance to do a Zoom message, so this might be it. Read them and think about them and leave. But let's read the verses. Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give their fathers, and they took possession of it, and they settled there.

And the Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed.

All came to pass. In all these verses, there's a lot of finality, isn't there? All, all the land swore to their fathers. They settled there.

The Lord gave them rest. Not one of their enemies withstood them. The Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises the Lord had made had failed.

[ 4 : 26 ] All came to pass. That sounds pretty good. I want to live there. You know, I want that to be my life. I want that to be yours. It's not, but this is, this time is after, for two guys, Caleb and Joshua, it's after 40 years of wandering in the desert.

Seven years of battles. You know, they're roughly 87 years old, let's say. You know, 80 years old, Caleb said, give me my inheritance. And it says he was just like he was the day he left Egypt, you know.

Just consider for a moment, all who were delivered from Egypt that are 20 years older, only two saw the promised possession. What would have been like?

How different the story would have been if the X number of hundreds of thousands or millions that came out of Egypt had believed the report of the 12 spies?

What if they would have believed that report? What a different account we would have in the Bible, right? But God's sovereign, all that, I get that.

[ 5 : 38 ] But they could have possessed it right away. They were right there, you know. And I guess that makes me ask the question, for myself and maybe you, do I have unbelief in my life?

What unbelief do I allow to persist to not embrace and live in the promises that God has for us or the victory that God has for me in my life?

If you're like me, you fall short a lot, often. You know, at an event Friday at work, and it's like, it's already stressful enough. But then when, if you're, after years of working, at some point some things you are an expert in them, you know what I mean?

And you know that the next thing that is happening is wrong, it's not right, and it's not going to work. And when people don't believe you, after two hours, you're pretty ticked off.

And you're, my Christianity suffers in that situation. And it's like, I have other things to do. And it's like, why do I have to prove it and discuss it for two hours to five different people when I know it's not going to work, you know?

[ 6 : 49 ] If I know a truck and a trailer are going to hit when they tow each other, and the truck tows a fifth wheel, and I know it at 11 o'clock, 11.30, why at 4 o'clock am I still dealing with it?

To say my blood level was, pleasure wasn't up, would be an understatement. You know, even talking about it still makes me angry. And then, of course, I lose my Christian witness, you know, among a couple of guys because I'm just like, I'm fed up, you know?

And all that to say, you know, it's like, why do we fail? You know, why do I fall short? You know, and I don't even know why I'm really mentioning it now. I'm sidetracked now.

I can't even follow my notes. Forget the point. Huh? You know? That's weird. But it's been so disruptive, you know, I've really lost my train of thought.

I shouldn't have gone there, I guess. It's not unbelievable. I don't know what... Sorry, let's just move on. Yeah. In these verses, we see the fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham some 475 years earlier.

[ 7 : 58 ] If you look in Genesis chapter 12, so what I mean by that is here we have Joshua and Caleb and all of Israel. They are...

The promise given to Abraham is fulfilled. They're actually standing in the very same place a very similar place geographically as Abraham was when the promise was given in Genesis 12.

The Lord said to Abraham, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, and I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. He said, You will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you will I curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abraham went, and the Lord, as the Lord had said to him, and Lot went with him.

Abraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haram. Abraham took his wife, Lot, his brother, son, and all their possessions. In Genesis 13, verse 14 to 17, The Lord said to Abraham, after Lot

had separated from him, Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward.

[ 9 : 07 ] For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.

Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you. Where Abraham walks through the land, that's the same land we're talking about here in Joshua.

In Genesis, we have Abraham looking to the north and seeing Mount Hermon to the east, Mount Gilead and Moab to the south, the area of Beersheba and to the west of the Mediterranean Sea. This big chunk of land that God promised them. The promise is fulfilled here in Joshua. In Joshua chapter 1, verses 1 to 6, it says, After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. This is a really similar verse as given to Abraham.

[ 10 : 15 ] Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you, just as I had promised Moses. From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, and as far as the great river, the river of Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the great sea, toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you, nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

And we know that no king, no group of kings, were able to withstand Joshua and the people of Israel. This account reminds me today that even when I remain faithless, God remains faithful. God remains faithful to us. God will keep his word to us in spite of our faithlessness. I find that to be very true. In 1 Corinthians, we can testify that this is true.

In the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 1, verse 4-9, in verse 9 in particular, it says, God is faithful by whom you were called into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 11 : 35 ] Same thought in 1 Thessalonians 5. He who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it. The faithfulness of God. I'm glad it doesn't depend on me.

God's faithfulness doesn't depend on me. In Titus chapter 1, very similar, Paul says this, Titus 1, verses 1 and 2, Paul, a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, with accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.

That verse clearly says that he will take care of our eternal life, our future. I can personally attest to or give witness to God's faithfulness in my life.

I believe he has led and guided me and continues to do so. I believe my wife, Nikki, and I were led to live the life that we've lived. I believe that the choices we made were based on his direction. We would assure you or agree that through the journey there were many tests and doubts about our decisions. But God has always remained faithful.

[ 13 : 04 ] I can say that without question. Maybe a couple things by way of testimony might fit here.

Recently, as I started out with this COVID-19 stuff and all that going on, it's interesting, about a year ago, the end of March, one of the employees I worked with for a long time quit.

She wasn't the service manager, but she and I had similar positions. And they asked if I'd be the service manager at work. I said, no, that's all right. I'll stay doing what I'm doing. And a month went by and then he approached me again and said, I want you to be the manager.

I'm like, whatever desk you want me to work at, I'll work. You know, just tell me what day is to work. I mean, honestly, after being there for 14 years, whatever, I can do the work. It's just a matter of what do you want me to do?

You know, maybe it'd be better for the company to do somebody else, get somebody different. I don't know. Do what you need to do. So I took the position. There were some people that said you shouldn't do it. Various reasons, this and that.

[ 14 : 11 ] I doubted, you know, maybe I shouldn't. Maybe I'd be too overwhelmed by it. Maybe this, maybe that. Wouldn't get support of the people I work with. You know, doubts, fears, lack of faith.

But I went ahead in faith, you know, just followed the Lord in it. I believed he wanted me to do it. So I did it. And then, you know, eight months go by. Of course they're hard and changes. You have to

implement things, you know, straighten things out.

Get in a rhythm. We hit January this year and things are starting to roll pretty good. A good month. February was a good month. As far as, talk about money, you know.

Profit was good. The service department. Then March hits. First two, three weeks of March. Two and a half weeks of March were great, you know. First two weeks. Boy, this is going to be a great year. Then this thing happened with COVID-19 and then a recession and then, holy cow, you know. But I didn't think at the time when I took the position that I would be managing through a crisis, if you will, or two, depending on how you look at it. And it was interesting that, you know, in light of that, that the Lord had his plan in place before I did, you know.

[15:20] You know, God had prepared me through other things in my life to deal with pressure, to deal with unknowns, to deal with people in my own way. You know, it might be different than someone else would deal with them.

And I really felt like through it that God was going to work it all out and be, and there were fears in the beginning of the crisis that we've had the last couple months. But I just trusted the Lord.

You know, at one point, the general manager, soon to be owner, maybe will be, said something to me about this or that. I said, look, I go, I get this is unusual times, you know.

I said, but, you know, in my life, I've gone through a lot already. So we'll just go through it. You know, I've been through 9-11. I've been through the recession of 08-09. I've had five kids.

My wife's had, we've been through a flood. You know, and those experiences in my life, I think, helped me to deal with things that come on. I don't think God by accident prepares you for certain things through the trials you go through, if that makes sense, you know.

[16:24] And, so, with the confidence of the Lord, I can go and say, we'll get through this, too. It's not going to be easy. Trials aren't easy.

They're hard. But that doesn't mean that God's not with you through them and they won't have a good result at the other end, you know. All that to say, that's kind of one thing that I way of testimony where I felt like the Lord used me or prepared me.

And we had gone through the book of Nehemiah a while back and we had that book, Hand Me Another Brick. And over the course of the last year, so I'd read that periodically in notes and it'd be funny, I won't look at it for a couple weeks or days and open it up, read two or three pages.

It's like, right where I'm at, you know. Like if there's a mocker at work, someone who mocks. You know, it's like, and they get you hacked off and then the next day it's like, I read something in that book and it'd be like, I hadn't read it for two weeks and it's like, spot on with that situation and identifies that person, their characteristics and just set me free.

It's like, well that person's just a mocker. So treat them like a mocker. You know, I don't have, you know, and it's just interesting how the Lord prepares you in a way. And one of the big events in my life years ago in 1995, I was working in food service.

[17:42] You know, I came from a food service background. I worked at two private schools and Gary Vineyard asked me to work at the Mako that he owned and it was like, Gary, I'm not a body shop guy.

You know, I know food service. And over the course of about a month and a half, the Lord changed my wife and I's heart about that, you know, and it was like, take the position.

It's like, well it doesn't make sense, God. Well, and I have verses in the front of my Bible. I can't hardly read it now. I wrote it then. You know, 25 years ago I could read that. But I wrote some verses down in April of 95, leaving Vianney High School for a new job with Gary Vineyard and how God had changed my heart and specific verses that he brought to our attention through it.

And some of those are Philippians chapter 1 verse 12 to 14. And it was, I want you to know, brothers, what has happened to me, this is Paul, has really served to advance the gospel. And from these verses, Philippians, I learned that God moves us around and changes our circumstances and our lives so we can have impact on different people's lives. He desires to get the gospel out.

[18:54] So God wanted the gospel out. Well, I'm not an evangelist, Lord, so here's me answering back to God. I need a spokesperson.

I'm not the evangelist type. Gary is. You know, some of you in this room are more evangelistic than I am. You know, the gospel is, you share it a lot more than I do. I know that for a fact.

Ephesians chapter 3 verse 1 to 12. And again, it's the gospel. It's in verse 7, it says, of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gifts of God's grace.

And in verse 8, Paul says, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light everyone what is the plan and the mystery hidden for the ages of God. These verses told me to go for the gospel.

Like, Lord, that doesn't make sense for me. My skill set is such. Go for the gospel. It's like, okay, I heard it twice now. I mean, that should be enough, right?

[ 19 : 51 ] And then, John chapter 21 verses 1 to 17. That's where Jesus, the disciples, decide to go fishing. You know, I go fishing.

I think some of us would know what, you know, Peter and John, and they just go, I don't know what the heck's going on. Jesus rose from the dead. We spent our last three years with him. I don't know what he's doing now. He's not with us all the time.

And he said, great things are coming, but I don't see anything happening. Let's go fishing. And they go fishing all night and catch nothing, and Jesus says, you know, throw your nets to their side and that whole discourse.

But then, Jesus and Peter are on the shore in verse 15. After they'd eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

And a lot of people think that Jesus is pointing to or referring to the fish. Peter, you know, Simon, do you love fishing more than me?

[ 20 : 50 ] It was like, the question that came through to me was, do I love food service more than the Lord? The Lord's telling me to go and I don't know anything about that business. Should I still go? You know, and it's like, okay, I do.

You know, I kind of do. And it's like, well, I want you to go anyway. And it was like, okay, so I'll go and do what Christ directed me to do, you know.

And I wrote this down at the time, a Christ-directed service of life or Christ-directed life of service to him yields the proper catch.

What may seem natural and uncomfortable may not produce a harvest. And, you know, I just felt like God led me then, you know, and he was faithful through that.

I brought, I said all that about the Mako and that because when I, and some eight years later, Gary bought a second store down in the city and I went down there to manage that store, which became a whole other sort of problems and issues and customer base and challenges and stress and things like that.

[ 21 : 56 ] To shorten that up, over the course of time down there, it was just a couple years, there was two guys that I hired to work there and one was he worked in the paint line, the other guy was a body man and the other guy was kind of assistant manager, production manager kind of guy.

Well, it turns out these guys were younger than me at that time, they still are obviously, but one of them, Izet, some of you may know Izet, him and his family, Izet at the time was a Bosnian man and not a believer, and he's going to go do trucking, you know, his mom or whatever got him into business to do trucking, over the road trucking and he does training for a trucking company right now.

Izet's a Christian and some years after he left Mako, I don't know when, he became a believer. Him and his wife have five kids and they homeschool. It's just like we did, you know, and it's like, and we met them and we've seen them over the years, we're not close them, they're friends with the X, I think.

Well, then there's this other guy, Brian, who, Brian Costa, who was the body guy I hired there, and he, over the course of somehow, over Facebook or somehow we've connected and found out he became a Christian, or was a Christian but wasn't a walking believer, just kind of living his life.

Well, it turns out, and the reason I bring it up is because about two weeks ago Brian was reaching out to me about buying a pop-up, and this and that's the guy I shared with Mark, I go, Mark, we don't have pop-ups, and they don't need to sell for the price that he wanted.

[ 23 : 35 ] Mark's got one, unless it sold yesterday. All gone, yeah, the one we had gone to at work. So Brian, I go, Brian, you need to maybe talk to Mark too, because we don't get them anymore, you know.

Anyway, so Brian, I reached out to him this past couple weeks ago, and I go, hey, we got a trailer in you might like, and they're going so fast right now, if you don't buy it, it's gone, you know. So

anyway, then I meet his wife, so she comes like a Friday, it was like two weeks ago, or a week and a half ago, I can't remember, but she came in the morning to look at this trailer, and I'm talking to her, she brings two of her kids, her oldest, Joey's 19, and another girl, well, they have five kids, and they homeschool.

Well, it's so ridiculous that that was probably one of the darkest times of my life, going to that, working in that store down in the city, and yet, God used it for the gospel.

And it's a long story to get to the point where I left something I was familiar with to do work at a body shop, and the Lord used it for the gospel in a way that I wasn't thinking, so I would talk to these guys a little bit, but not probably like Mike does with his employees.

But Bridget and Brian, apparently these past 15 years, when something goes a certain way, Bridget will say, you're acting like Tom. I'm like, are you kidding me?

[ 24 : 55 ] So she's telling me this like two weeks ago when I'm talking to her. I had no idea that I could have had an impact on people's lives at that time, but it was just, God was faithful in spite of me, and in spite of the circumstances, but it reaped some fruit, and the obedience to go when God said to go.

And I can just look back on that and see God's faithfulness in it. There's a lot more I could say, I guess, and maybe I said too much, but I want you to know I can really identify with Caleb and Joshua a lot.

I'm really always challenged by their example of faithfulness to their calling. They've always impressed me. believed God 47 years earlier and had to wait and endure the desert and all that time knowing they should have possessed the land at 40 years old instead of 80 or 87.

You know, they went through all the trials in the wilderness with the people that, and they had faith, they had belief, yet they had to put up all that and wait.

And I think they're such a good example. remarkable. Remarkably, their faith led a nation into the promised land.

[ 26 : 22 ] Upon their testimony, the nation could proceed. You know, God built that nation on these two guys' belief. We don't really think about that. You know, you think of Moses, and then you think of the judges, and then you think of the kings, you know.

But you don't think about Joshua and Caleb building the ones that the nation was built on. These guys who believed God many years before, and went in and possessed the land and conquered the land, and yet that's what God used to start the nation, if you will.

I know they started back, you know, you go back to Abraham, their calling, and all that, or when they left Egypt, and all those kinds of things. Quickly, I think it would be negligent on my part if I didn't mention God's faithfulness to us through the scriptures, the promise of the Messiah, and the promise of his coming, and the promise of eternal life.

You know, it's a good study that I won't go over it today, but if you go back to the beginning of Genesis chapter three, you know, there's a promise, I'll put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring.

He'll bruise your head, he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel, and then Isaac is a type of Christ, right? You know, a promise, God himself will provide a lamb.

[ 27 : 44 ] You know, we have this promise of a redeemer, a savior coming, and a woman will be with child, the virgin will bring forth a child, and then we see the fulfillment of that in Luke.

The example of the bronze snake on a pole, if you look at it, you'll be healed, and then in the gospels we read, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so too everyone who looks at the Son of Man will be saved, you know.

On and on and on it goes. You could spend a long time on a study just about that, just about the promise of the coming Messiah and all the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled to the point of the death of the cross.

And we would agree that God was faithful and all that, right? And he has also promised us his soon return, which seems slow, but yet it's coming.

Just as he went up, he's going to come back. You know, in Acts it says, so the angels told him. The way he went up, he's coming back. Paul teaches us in Thessalonians, he's coming. He's coming for his church.

[ 28 : 48 ] He's coming to take us out. And we know that heaven waits for us. We had a study a while ago in heaven. We're going through the book of Revelation now.

All these things have to happen, but God will restore all things, and he has a place for you and me in eternity. Those who trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for their salvation have a place in eternity with him in glory forever.

And I think, I just want you to know that he's faithful. And it seems slow. It seems far away, maybe. Maybe it seems closer than it did yesterday.

But God's faithful. You know, he's faithful through the ages. And that's the point of the message this morning. That's pretty much all I have to say about this.

And I think if we could close with one verse out of Deuteronomy 32. You might want to open your Bible and look at this one. It's Deuteronomy chapter 2.

[ 29 : 51 ] It's a song of Moses. Deuteronomy chapter 32. And they call it the Song of Moses.

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak. And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, like showers upon the herb.

For I will proclaim the name of the Lord, ascribe greatness to our God, the rock. His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.

A God of faithfulness, and without iniquity, just and upright is he. If you are like me, sometimes you need to realign your thoughts, realign your life.

Take the time to do that. Take time, maybe today as you're driving home, or relaxing, or whatever you're doing. Think about God's faithfulness to you in your life so far.

[ 30 : 59 ] And then think about your future, that he will remain faithful to you. Whatever that might look like, you know, it's not always what we think, but God's faithful through it. And that's where we need to have our faith.

That's where we need to rest, you know. I think it's encouraging to live a life of faith in God and trusting in him. Let's close in prayer and sing another song.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that you're faithful even when we remain faithless. I thank you that not only do you promise to save us, keep us, preserve us for eternal life, but you have a place prepared for us.

And you will come back for us. These tumultuous times we live in don't take you by surprise. They do surprise us. It seems like some of the things happening are a foretaste of more things to come, a foreshadowing of more things to come, more upheaval, more disruptions in our lives, more disruptions about the way we go about our days, our business, our home life, so many things.

But we know you're faithful, God, and you'll take care of us through it all, good or bad in our opinion, but you'll be faithful. Thank you in Jesus' name. Thank you in Jesus' name. Thank you in Jesus' name.

[ 32 : 27 ] Thank you, God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Beautiful. Thank you. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.