

Many people find the book of Joshua disturbing because of its focus on conquest and war. The concern is what this says about God. As I have said, this was to be a one-off act of judgement to be executed by the Israelites. The reasons for this were discussed in a previous edition of *Thrive* and I will revisit this further on. But note in Joshua 2 how mercy trumps judgement. God had said to Abram that those who bless His people will be blessed (Genesis 12:3) and here in chapter 2 we see an unworthy prostitute being spared from the conquest. There is no hesitation to answer Rahab's request to be spared from the destruction that would soon follow. Moreover, in addition to this she is included amongst God's people and even becomes part of the Messianic line (Matthew 1:5). She is listed in Hebrews as a hero of the faith. (Hebrews 11:31; see also James 2:25.) God is a God of mercy. If things come to judgement at any point it is only because it is a necessary evil – far from an expression of the goal toward which the heart of God is inclined. Mercy always triumphs over judgement and we see this here in the midst of one of the darkest periods of judgement recorded in the Bible. It is a key reminder that God never turns away someone who seeks Him, no matter how unworthy they may be.

Read Joshua 2

Thank God for His mercy upon you.

You're Not Alone - Psalm **13**

To understand the psalms, we need to go forward about 700 years from where we are now in Joshua. In 587 BC Judah (and Benjamin), the remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel, was overrun by the Babylonians. Jerusalem and the great temple of Solomon were destroyed amidst a bloody massacre. Most of the survivors were then taken into exile. In their trauma and confusion, the Jews wondered why this had happened and whether God had forsaken them. They found the answer in the official records of the kings and prophets that they salvaged from their burning city. They had forsaken God but this was not the first time. They saw in the records of the past and in the oracles of the prophets that God would be willing to restore them if only they cried out to Him. It was at this time that they also looked to the psalms. These songs were among the most valued writings that were preserved from the fires and they provided for them a pathway forward. They saw in the psalms that they were not the first ones to feel forsaken. They saw, in the experiences of many psalm writers, a reflection of their own grief and confusion. If you find yourself feeling forsaken by God, then know that you are not the first one to feel this. It's not that God isn't 'working out' for you. This is a normal part of the experience of faith and it is abundantly attested to in the psalms and stories of the Bible. In your grief, confusion and disappointment you are in the company of many great people.

Read **Psalm 13**. Bring your grievances before God.