

James, a little five-chapter book, was perhaps Martin Luther's least favorite book — and one he argued against including in the New Testament. I'm so glad it made it in! I find it to be profoundly hopeful. James 1:22-25 says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it — not forgetting what they have heard but doing it — they will be blessed in what they do." The bridge of *God for All* says, *"If you're feeling lonely, our God loves you. If you feel unworthy, our God loves you."* And just before that, it says, *"No matter where you come from or what you have done, He will hear your call, cause He's the God for all."*

We might easily hear these truths and pass them by quickly, thoughtlessly. *"I know, I'm loved, yes. God is with me, of course. He is in control, for sure."* But I wonder, are you, as James warned, like someone who looks at yourself in the mirror, and immediately forgets what you look like? Can you claim to know you are loved, chosen, redeemed if you live your life full of fear, insecurity, jealousy and strife? I think then this claim rings hollow.

This should not discourage us though! James offers us a practical and immediate solution, "...look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom..." Yes, your maker does *"invite you to come and take your position as part of His mission."* He also provides you with the richest book of promises to look intently into. As you listen to the words of this song, I gently encourage you to consider when you last looked *intently* into the Scripture God gave us — not for ministry, to write a sermon, or find the right verse for an event theme, but rather looked at it intently because it brings us freedom, believing that the supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit will not leave you as you are. As you look at this book of truth, the love you extend to the world will flow directly from the startling and transformative truth you have so intently studied: the God of the universe loves *you*.

I leave you with this quote below from the beloved Pope John Paul II, a reminder of what we all desire to receive and rest in – indeed, the assurance that God knows and loves us.

*"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle."*