Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Work of His Hands (Jeff Williams)
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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Truth Matters 2011

Good Afternoon, I'm Jay Flowers, Director of Communications for Grace To You and it's my privilege today to introduce to you our next speaker, Colonel Jeffrey Williams.

Grace To You first came to know Jeff in 1999. In the early days of e-mail we received the following message sent to the ministry's general e-mail address.

"Dear John," we get a lot of Dear John letters at Grace To You, very sad.

"Dear John, I have long intended to write but it has taken years to do so. I've been a Grace To You listener since 1987 after discovering your radio program on a local Christian radio station." That was KHTB in Houston. "I have two purposes in writing. The first is to briefly extend my thanks and the second is to make a special request.

I became a Christian in 1987, although at the time I was very successful by the world's standards, things were in shambles both personally and spiritually. Although I won't go into details now, it was then that God extended his grace to my wife, Anna Marie, and me and we came to Christ. Thankfully from the beginning I was inclined to test everything I heard against God's Word. Your teaching was especially challenging and motivated me to search the Scriptures to see if it was so. I thank you for the integrity of your teaching, and your faithfulness to God's Word. To a large extent, it has been your teaching and ministry that has prepared me to teach and minister to God's people as a lay person wherever God has sent us. For that, I extend my heartfelt gratitude.

Now for my request. By the providence of God I am currently training on the crew of the Space Shuttle Atlantis. We are scheduled to launch from Kennedy Space Center in support of the new International Space Station. NASA allows crew members to carry a limited number of personal items during the flight. I would be honored if I could fly a memento for the Grace To You staff. Flying a copy of The MacArthur Study Bible may be the best option, literally taking God's Word around the globe as a symbol of what the radio ministry is already doing. Hopefully you find my request appropriate. I only wish to extend my gratitude, acknowledge the work of those at Grace To You and glorify God in the process. In His service, Jeff Williams"

I don’t know what your policy is, but when an astronaut offers to fly something for me on the Space Shuttle, I always say yes. So in the early morning hours in the Spring of 2000, Jeff embarked on his first space flight in what was described then as the most spectacular shuttle launch in its history. With Jeff launched a copy of The MacArthur Study Bible and a personal relationship with Grace To You that has deepened and widened significantly in the decade since.

In his two subsequent flights to the International Space Station, Jeff again took Grace To You along with him, flying mementos for the staff, conducting live video conferences with us and making several long, long, long, long, long distance phone calls to our offices.

After returning to Earth, he was featured on Grace To You radio in an interview with John MacArthur. He has spoken at several conferences, including one here at Grace Church. Most recently, the focus of his presentations has been photography from his 2006 mission. During that six-month flight, he took an astounding number of photographs of the Earth, more than any astronaut in history. The best of the best became the foundation for the compelling presentation you’re about to experience. Please welcome Colonel Jeffrey Williams. (Applause)

JEFF: Thank you, Jay. Thank you, Jay, for that introduction. It almost took my train of thought away, especially reflecting back on the initial conduct we had with the ministry and the response and the honor to get to know the folks out here, not only John himself and his family, but the staff at Grace To You. Jay went to the shuttle flight that he mentioned, he also traveled along with a couple of other folks on staff to the Mission Control Center in Houston for the Souse launches that came subsequently.

I think you would agree with me that a theme, and perhaps the common theme, of a Christian life is…should be and usually is, if you are like I think you are, and that is dedicated to God’s Word and to knowing Him through how He has revealed Himself, the theme of the Christian life is gratitude. And Jay reflected on that a little bit, and I know that this room is full of folks that are experiencing and live out gratitude, a life of gratitude…gratitude to our Savior for His grace that we’ve heard so eloquently both last night and today, as well as gratitude for the faithful work of God’s instruments in the making of the truth of the Scripture plain to us, making sense of it. And John has done that so well. Jay touched on the impact that the ministry and John’s teaching has had on Anna Marie and I, and I know that that is common here in this room.

I was overwhelmed, as I know many others were, with the raising of hands last night when the question was asked: “How many have been here for the first time?” I mean, that is an incredible testimony of this ministry that is centered here at Grace Community Church. And for that reason, it makes it even more intimidating to be standing here doing this.

Almost a hundred years ago, Benjamin Warfield, who you may be familiar with, wrote something I came across a little while ago, where he said, “A Christian sees God in everything.” And then he used an analogy of a window. And he says, “A window stands before us and you can look at the window and you can contemplate how it’s made. You can look at the defects in the window.” And sometimes I found myself looking at old windows in old buildings and watching the waviness, and you’ve done that, perhaps. The house I grew up in had…the original windows had waviness in it. So you can focus on the window. “Or you can look through the window and see the view on the other side.”

And the analogy he applied to seeing God in everything around us, we can stand on the edge of a cliff and look across a valley, we can watch a sunset, we can watch an ocean view, or whatever. And we can see all of that. Or we can look even past it and see God’s creative work and God’s work in general in that. That’s what I’m going to attempt to do for you this afternoon, is give you a glimpse but encourage you to see the glimpse and see what Warfield called the window, that is God’s creative work, but also to see through that and see God Himself.

I’ll mention one other person out of history, his name is John Flavel, he was a Puritan pastor in England in the late 1600’s. He wrote many things. One of the things he wrote was called, “The Mystery of Providence.” And I read that back in the early nineties and it really opened my eyes to the study and the realization of the providence of God. And Flavel in his book encouraged all Christians, he said, “In fact, we have a duty to acknowledge the providence of God, to study the providence of in the details of our life. And we know that from the scriptures, too, that God ordains all things in our life. Every day it was written in His book before they came to pass, etc., etc. And Flavel encourages us to look at the providence of God in our lives, in our upbringing, what time in history we were born, when we were saved, coming to Christ and coming to the knowledge of God, the grace that’s extended in our families, in our marriage, in our circumstances, in our vocation. That had a significant impact on me as well. And it’s part of that message that I pray that you hear through my presentation today as well.

I’m here speaking as a sinner redeemed to a bunch of sinners redeemed. Right? And we’ve heard that so gracefully.

I am not going to stand up here and defend the teachings of creation, I’m going to assume them. I’m not going to defend the providence of God, I’m going to assume that and I trust I’m before an audience that does the same thing.

Well what I want to do is give you, attempt to give you a glimpse of the wonders of our Lord in a very unique way. Now you know when you talk about things like this , like the picture that’s displayed up behind me, you often think about some of the Psalms, perhaps, Psalm 8 is one that’s very familiar to us. The entire Psalm is incredible. You know it from perhaps the verse, “When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You’ve set in place, what is man

that You are mindful of him and the Son of Man that You care for Him." I encourage you as homework to go read that entire Psalm, especially after this presentation.

Psalm 19 is another incredible Psalm that talks about God's revelation. The first few verses talk about His natural revelation that you're going to view here and then in the middle of the Psalm, and I'm sure many of you have heard John's teaching on Psalm 19, talks about his special revelation and the character of God's Word. I encourage you to use that Psalm as homework as well.

Psalm 104 is a great Psalm that details God's creative power and sustaining power in the provision that He gives His creatures. Psalm 139, I think it might have been mentioned already in the conference as one that gives great comfort to us. It's a very personal Psalm. So all those Psalms, 8; 19, 104, 139, I'm not going to spend any time in today, but I encourage you to go read them after this presentation.

Now in order to give you a glimpse of the wonders of God's creation from this vantage point that I'm talking about, I need to give you a perspective of what the vantage point is. So imagine yourself on the International Space Station, traveling seventeen thousand, five hundred miles an hour, orbits the earth every ninety minutes. If you were to ride on a rocket and get there, you'd get to orbit in about nine minutes and then typically it would take you about two days to catch up and dock with the thing. And then this place is your home. It's about the size of a, on the inside, a large five bedroom home. It's got a few windows, thankfully. That's the best part, to be able to view the Earth. But imagine yourself there, imagine yourself going outside perhaps once in a while and hanging on to the outside and viewing God's creation, we call Earth, down below. I call this "The Ultimate Sky Dive."

To give you a perspective looking out the window, we have here Great Salt Lake which is right here…and we're looking to the southwest. So we're presently right down in here somewhere, maybe under those clouds. So that's a…we're just in this picture, the Space Station is just northeast of Great Salt Lake looking to the southwest and we see the horizon of the Earth.

Or this one here which is up just north of Prince Edward Island, looking to the southwest, looking down the St. Lawrence Seaway. So that gives you a little bit of perspective on the vantage point from which I want to talk.

Turn to Job 26, if you would. Job 26, we heard earlier from Job 26, I had not…I had forgotten that passage that John referenced, so I made a note of that cause that's a wonderful passage. Job 26, perhaps some would say it's the oldest book in the Bible, and I'm not going to go through the entire chapter here. But I want to start, for the sake of time, in verse 7. And Job, of course, is confessing the truth of God's majesty here in this. And those of you that are familiar with the book of Job are familiar with some of the discourses within the book of Job doing this.

Verse 7, “He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing.” I can tell you after traveling around the world, I don’t know how many times, sixteen times a day for almost a year, there are no strings attached. This is an incredible verse that testifies to the truth of Scripture, right? And God’s creative power. Especially when you remember that the time in history when this was written.

Verse 8 continues, “He binds up the waters in His thick clouds and the cloud is not split open under them. He covers the face of the full moon and spreads over its clouds. He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters as a boundary between light and darkness.” This picture shows that circle, we call it the Terminator, and we travel over it twice in orbit. It is the line that you would naturally assume on the earth that divides the light from the darkness and it’s written right here in the book of Job in verse 10. He’s inscribed a circle on the face of the waters as a boundary between light and darkness.

We won’t go there, but Job 38:14, you might make a note of it, says that the place of dawn, that is the place on the Earth that it is dawn currently is changed like clay under a seal. And it’s talking about a seal that would be a like a cylinder, maybe a clay seal that they would use to authenticate a document in those times, and roll it over soft clay. You know we know about the seals, we know about the seal stamps and what not. This is a cylindrical shaped seal that he’s referring to in Job 38:14, he says, “The place of dawn is changed like the clay under a seal, a seal rolling across the Earth. And that’s how this looks.

This is a very difficult thing to take a picture of because it’s very bright on one part of it and very dark on the other one. But it’s an incredible truth that comes out of the Scripture when you look out the window and see this.

If we continue in Job 26 verse 11, “The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his rebuke. By His power He stilled the sea. By His understanding He shattered Rahab. By His wind the heavens were made fair. His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

And then this verse, verse 14, “Behold, these are but the outskirts of His ways and how small a whisper do we hear from Him? But the thunder of His power, who can understand?” In spite of all of this, this glimpse that we have in God’s creation, looking at the window that Warfield talked about, it is, the Scripture says here, it is but a glimpse. It is but a faint whisper.

Now I don’t want to stop here, I want to go a little bit farther and explore a little bit the elements of that faint whisper, and then maybe we’ll get to what he might be alluding here to, and I think you can probably guess what it was, but we’ll work our way through that to get there.

Let’s look at this…the outskirts of His ways. Here’s a glimpse of a low sun looking at the reflections in the ocean and different cloud layers, just absolutely incredible when you see this. I’m never tired of

seeing views like this. It is a great example of what we call beauty, right? And beauty has some classic elements to it, elements of like harmony, symmetry, unity, balance, order. And all of those can manifest themselves in the shapes, in the colors, in the scale of things. And you see a view like this and you see all those elements in here that give us a glimpse of beauty.

By the way, the fact that we even contemplate beauty tells us something else. Here we're observing God's work in creation, but if we look at it subjectively and contemplate that we're even thinking about it, that's testimony for…what?...being created in the image of God. That gives us even a glimpse of what it means to bear God's image. And these are absolutely incredible, profound truths when you look at them through or with a vantage point like this.

I mentioned going around the world every ninety minutes, so you see a sunrise or sunset, if you're in the window, of course, that often. And here's an example of a sunset, typical sunset where you see the layers of the atmosphere which manifests themselves in various colors. The lower parts of the atmosphere are the oranges, and you see shadows of clouds in the oranges. And then the upper parts go blues and yellows and whites. Notice here how relatively thin the atmosphere is, relative to the diameter of the Earth. The Earth itself…in my world, of course, we think of space craft and all the systems it takes to sustain life on a spacecraft. The Earth itself is a spacecraft, created in the wisdom and the majesty of God for a purpose that we are well aware of, but even broader in scope is that purpose. And we're going to try to roll that out here in the next few minutes.

Another example of some incredible sights here is a close up of again a sunset right after the sun goes over the horizon. This is very interesting. It's what we call noctilucent clouds, or the Russians call them silver clouds. They're rarely seen over the poles, usually in December or June. June over the North Pole, December over the South Pole. Nobody really knows exactly how they're formed. It's presumed that they are made up of ice crystals. They're very high, higher than any airplane flies and lower than we typically fly, we pass through it and don't stay there long enough to collect any data. But we call them noctilucent clouds. You might do a Google Search on them and sees that somebody theorizes that they're made by the shuttle plume, Space Shuttle Plume. But these were first seen in the late eighteen hundreds, so don't believe that.

By the way, the elements of beauty that I talked about, not only exist in nature but they also exist in mathematics, in art which is creation with a small "c" by man, right? And it is evidence of being created in the image of God. It's seen in music. I see Clayton sitting down here and we have experienced some wonderful music here at Grace Church and all of those elements of beauty are seen in all of those things. When I was growing up, I accumulated rather quickly a strong interest in math, a fascinating interest in math. I think those were seeds that God planted in me as a young man even as early as sixth grade, because math was so incredible. It could predict what you saw. You could use mathematics to predict motions and do all kinds of things. It could be used to describe things. And it's evidence of the creative order that God has given to us.

Some more examples. Let's go to the surface of the Earth. Here's the Colorado River, upstream of Lake Powell. It's an optical illusion that makes it look like the river is flowing on the top of a ridge. It's actually done in a canyon there, the Grand Canyon with some misty clouds over it. And many of you have been there. And I use the Grand Canyon as a great analogy to what you see from orbit when you view the Earth. The closest thing…one of the closest things you can get to on Earth is to go to the edge of the Grand Canyon and view it from the edge. Here's the Grand Canyon in the wintertime. The scriptures talked about seasons as well. Seasons come and go. We're very familiar with them here. They come and go as you're orbiting the Earth too for months at a time.

Here's one a little bit closer to where we are right here, that's Mono Lake up there. These are the Sierra Nevadas. So Mount Whitney is down in here, Mammoth Mountain, if you guys are skiers and you've gone out here, is in that view. An example, these are the Alps looking to the northeast from maybe just west of Italy, looking to the northeast over Switzerland and into Germany. Glacier…Glaciers were fascinating to me and I spent a lot of time trying to document all the glaciers around the world…not for the sake of supporting global warming but for the beauty and the majesty that you find even in the glaciers. This one is in northern Pakistan. Here's a couple here from the Patagonia region in the southern tip of South America. Just beautiful in their form. Some of you have perhaps been up to Alaska and had the opportunity to see glaciers up there.

Sand dunes were another collection that I gave, and I love sand dunes because they show, as I mentioned before, the order in God's Creation. And they show the mathematics in God's Creation. I talked about being able to predict things mathematically. You can predict, if you throw a ball, you can predict where it's going to land mathematically.

Now when you see something like sand dunes, you can see if you're a mathematician. I know there's probably a couple here in the crowd. You can see the order in the different dunes, in different scales. There's large scale dunes, and there's smaller scale dunes. They have a pattern that is maybe discernable or difficult to discern, but it can be described mathematically. And sand dunes are a great example of that.

There's another set of sand dunes. The first one that I showed was in the Sahara Desert. This one is in Mongolia. This one fascinated me because as I was…and this, by the way, taken through hand-held photography. This particular one was with a 400…actually an 800 mil. Lens, 400 mil. Lens with a two X doubler so equivalent 800 mil. So a lens about this big. So when you look through the view finder, you're looking across about ten miles. This one was in Mongolia and those look like lakes in there. And I thought who put lakes in the middle of the sand dunes? It turns out when I got back I did a little research and there lakes there. The water table is very high. And it's a…I don't know how common it would be but it is a tourist attraction. Probably one of those extreme tourist destinations. Now we're back in another part of the Sahara Desert and this one looks very geometric here. And

again, you can see the order in God's creation. You can see sand dunes at different scales. You see large scale ridges, there's one, here's the next one here going in that direction. And then perpendicular you see other patterns at a smaller scale. So it's very geometric. And again, I believe that it's testimony to the order of God.

Coral Reefs were another example of what I loved seeing that illustrated the beauty in God's creation. This is the Bahamas, not too far off the coast of Florida, a wide angle view. And here's a closer angle view where you see just again another example of incredible beauty. When you see this, whether it be with the naked eye or on a screen like this, it looks like a water-colored painting you might see in some museum. But it is actually the way it looks, just incredible in beauty and pattern and color. Here's a close-up of that scene, Coral Reef.

Just another example, some rivers…this is the Missouri River up in South Dakota. The small white stream that flows into it is actually called the White River. It has its source in the Bad Lands area of the western end of South Dakota. If you've been there, you know the terrain is very white and so that you have a white silt that it carries down into the Missouri and you get this very unique pattern in the confluence of those two rivers. So it was just something that, you know, it strikes your eye when you're scanning the Earth below.

This is a river in northern Italy…I'm sorry, India, northern India. It's the Bamaputra River. It has its source in the Himalaya Mountains. And I understand that this area here, which has a lot of channels, is full of wild animals, tigers, and hippopotamuses, and other things like that. So I'm sure it's a very interesting place to go visit. I'm not interested right now in going there, but it is beautiful from Earth.

Another flood plain of a river, this one is in the border between Russia and China, the Amah River. This is one of astronauts favorite river, it's on the Madagascar, the Island of Madagascar which is just southeast of the continent of Africa. It's the Betsop Polka River Delta, it carries red clay down from the Highlands where it finds its source and this is the Delta where it flows into the Indian Ocean. So just some other examples of the beauty of God's Creation.

You see patterns in clouds, and I won't show a whole lot of clouds here but I will show these, they look like just a bunch of rolls of cotton rolled up and again you see order here, but you also see behind it these little circles. You know what that is? That's agriculture. It's in the central U.S., perhaps in Nebraska or South Dakota, or somewhere near, I don't know exactly where. But this slide I put in there to kind of transition between the beauty and order in God's Creation to the provision that we find in God's Creation. Hebrews 11:3, you know very well, starts out by faith, we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God. Colossians 1 which John read to us last night, verse 17, says, "We know that in Christ all things hold together." So He is the Creator, He is the Sustainer. We also see purpose in His Creation when we consider the habitation of His Creation we see us and we see what's going on on the Earth in history. And presently we see purpose.

Turn with me, if you would, to Genesis 1. I know this is a very familiar passage but I want to read it so it's fresh on your mind in its context. Genesis 1 starting with verse 28. Speaking of man, that is Adam and Eve, verse 28, God said…"And God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the Earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant-yielding seed that is on the face of the Earth and every tree with seed in it, in its fruit you shall have them for food. And every beast of the earth and every bird of the heavens, and everything that creeps on the Earth, everything that has breath of life, I have given every green plant for food, and it was so.' And God saw that He had made….that what He had made….saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

So God created the heavens and the earth and He created mankind. And He created all the plant life and the animal life. And He created all of that for a purpose. And, of course, the ultimate purpose we heard so eloquently already today and last night. Isaiah 45 verse 18 says, "The Lord had created the heavens and earth who formed the earth and made it, He established it, He did not create it empty but formed it to be inhabited." And when one views the earth, you see a uniqueness. You see that the Earth is habitable and habitated. We know that, right? Or inhabited, rather. And we see provision that comes out as God's Creation and a large part of that provision we see in the agriculture. This is just north of Paris, see in the fields north of Paris…and by the way, when you see different parts of the Earth, you can see not only the part of the Earth you're in based on the geography, but you also see in the patterns of the agriculture, you see culture, you see history in every part of the Earth has some uniqueness to it. So you can see all of those elements in the pictures as well. This is lumbering operations in the state of Washington. Looks like a big checkerboard up there and that's…I think they're square miles, that's how they harvest the lumber up there.

This is in Bolivia in South America. I don't know why they designed it this way, but there are about…about five kilometers across squares, so a unique kind of agricultural development there.

This is in Central Africa, so again you can see a little bit of culture here. The scale of the Agricultural activity is much different than the other ones that I had shown.

Saudi Arabia where they irrigate the desert out there and grow primarily wheat.

Another part of God's provision, you'll see the irrigation circles in the background, that's New Mexico, and then you also see the white dots there, that's oil fields. So another example of God's provision. Of course, it's very obvious to us but maybe we don't think about it are the minerals and the elements, the raw materials that we get out of the Earth, in this case oil, natural gas would be another one. Mining things under the Earth, the different ores around the Earth. Of course, that's very obvious

to us, but again sometimes we take it for granted, we forget that it is part of the provision of the Earth that God intended and gave purpose to in His original Creation for mankind and all living beings on the Earth.

This is a coal mine in east Germany. Salt mines in China…I'm sorry, salt ponds in China. Another set of salt ponds in China. Fish farms, this was pretty interesting to me. I passed over the Nile River, Delta in Egypt where the sun angle was just right where the sun was reflecting off these things and these are all fish ponds here near Cairo. And I did some research and most of the fish grown there is tilapia which is a pretty common fish that we eat. But then I found out that we don't get our tilapia from there, we get it elsewhere, which I thought was good news.

Fish farms, this one is in South America. The habitation on Earth is very obvious. This is New York City at night, an example which you could see at night. Manhattan in the daytime. You can see Central Park here. Here's a close up of that same picture you see ground zero there at the southern end of Manhattan. So you see the good and the beauty, but you also see the reality of sin and the consequences of sin on the Earth.

Pearl Harbor, example of a place that we're all familiar with. It's got much history there. It's a very beautiful place from orbit. Bagdad, when you're, as I used to say, stuck in a tin can for six months, it's easy to start feeling sorry for yourself. And this was one part of the world that every time we flew over it, it reminded me that there were a lot of people out there sacrificing themselves for things we too often take for granted in the defense of our freedoms. This is Central Bagdad, the Tigris River in the green zone is right here. Washington D.C., so there's the capitol building, the Washington Monument is right there. There's the White House, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial over here.

When you're stuck up there, I learned in a new way that we are relational beings. We miss our families, right? And my dear wife is sitting down here, we don't like being apart. So it was a particularly difficult for us to be apart like this, but because we are relationship beings, seeing human activity on the earth was something I found very important. And I think you can relate to this. This was Memorial Day 2006 and I thought that…it's the first weekend of the summer and those who have boats are out in their boats, and so we passed over, and we could see boats, we can see boat wakes and stuff, that's what all this is. And the sun glint as we pass over water and the sun's reflecting right there. And sure enough, Memorial Day 2006, there were boaters out there so that kind of made my moment, sustained me a little bit in an example of God's sustenance.

By the way, this is also, you can do some human activity there, but if you think that these pictures were taken from an airliner, there's your airliner. This is one of the Aleutian Islands and I think that guy is probably on the Tokyo to L.A. route or something like that.

Niagara Falls and seasons go by, there's Niagara Falls again, frozen, continues to flow through the wintertime. The pyramids, another example of history and a significant place on the Earth, right there in the Pyramids. You can't see them with a naked eye, but you can see them with that big lens I talked about. Of course, being relational, we celebrated events on board. This was a year and a half ago Christmastime, multinational, two Russians, a Japanese and two Americans. Of course, visitors from Earth every now and then, they were good, they would bring beads and trinkets from home, and cards and letters and fresh fruit and vegetables.

This is a story I'm going to take a couple of minutes on. This is a volcano and you can see the entire plume right there. This is one of the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska. It was six weeks into a six-month expedition on board the Space Station. And by the way, we have good contact with the ground. Anna Marie and I talked every day, typically twice a day. So we stayed in touch very regularly. And six weeks into that six-month mission, I was having a kind of a bad day. Six months…or, six weeks it had been a long time, and six months was way over my horizon. You know, you couldn't see the end.

So she knew that. She was aware of that. And it was…at the time there was only two of us on board, Pavlo, Vane, Grativ, and I, my Russian crew mate and I. and we were pretty busy on the Space Station, we were usually at opposite ends, so we were usually by ourselves. But I'd go back to the back end of the space station where he typically was, and occasionally have a bag of tea…we'd drink bags or tea out of…through a straw out of a bag. And I would have a tea with him, and chit-chat a little bit and then go back forward and go about my business.

Well I did that, as was my habit, one day and then as I was heading forward, I floated over a couple of windows, saw out the windows that we were going over some islands. So as was my habit, I grabbed a camera and got in the windows, started taking pictures of the islands. So it went one island, the next island, the next island, and then I got to this one, went one more and something in the back of my head said, "Hey, there's something different there." So I went back to this one and got off three or four pictures, saw that it was erupting, there was a fresh eruption 'cause you could see the entire plume in the view. I was pretty excited about that, took that forward, got on the radio, called Houston, Mission Control, said, "Hey, I just saw a newly erupting volcano, thought you'd like to notice, I got some pictures I'll send down, we can send them down electronically. And so they could hear the excitement in my voice and I think that excited the team down there in Houston.

The Campcon that was on duty, Steve Bowen, he took the initiative to get on the Internet. He googled Alaskan Volcano Observatory, got their phone number, called them up, said, "Hey, this is Steve Bowen calling from Mission Control down in Houston, we just got a report from one of our astronauts in the International Space Station that one of your volcanoes is erupting." And the scientist said he got on the phone, she had in her voice the obvious communication that she wasn't quite buying this. Surely this was a prank call. But he kept talking to her, assuring her that this was true and what not.

And they finished their phone conversation and I'm not sure what she had concluded at the end of that, but at any rate he sent me her name and phone number. So I called her up. This is still in the orbit after, you know, before we had gone around, cause I had set my stop watch, or my alarm to ring just prior to going over it again, because we'd have one more opportunity to see it ninety minutes later.

So I called her up and identified myself and if you get a call from the Space Station, there's a lag in the communication. So you say a couple of seconds there, and a lag, and it's hard to get used to at first. So she knew there was something unique there, but I could tell in her voice that she still wasn't quite buying into this prank.

But later on she got the picture. She knew it was all on the up and up. And I guess that whole organization up there was pretty excited about that and I went on about my business. The alarm went off for the ninety-minute later pass and I got in the window, both Pavlo and I got in the window and there it was. And so the cloud had detached from the volcano already and it was way downwind, so it was done. And so I saw that, and you see the fresh lava, by the way, flowing down there. This is a volcano they call Cleveland. You can look it up as well. So I saw this as a unique provision of God to bring me out of my slump. And oh by the way, it was a direct answer to Anna Marie's prayer for me 'cause she knew what I needed. So just absolutely incredible.

Now the first time we passed by it, Pavlo wasn't in the window, so he missed it. So I figured I'm the only guy on the planet or off the planet that saw that particular eruption and God gave it to me as a special provision.

Dynamic events are something else that are interesting there. We know that the tragedy and the damage that can come out of hurricanes, this was a hurricane that did not hit the Continental U.S., it was in the Atlantic, but absolutely incredible, viewing it from orbit.

Now the sand storms, these are in Kazakhstan. The results of war, this was in Lebanon, you remember, perhaps in August, I think it was, in 2006 there was a war between Israel and Lebanon and this is a power plant, I think, that it had been bombed and I happened to catch it. I knew the war was going on so I was trying to capture photographic evidence of that, caught that. This was called the Day fire, just north of here, up north of Santa Clarita. So this one I shipped here to the Grace To You folks right away to let them know that there was a fire in their backyard.

Of course, I've talked about God as Creator, God as a Sustainer of His Creation, God as Provider. Of course, we are centered in the thoughts surrounding God as Redeemer. So passing over this part of the Earth and here you see Israel, here the Jordan River, the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee, Israel there. By the way, this is one of the few political borders you can see from space because it's irrigated on the Israel side, and, of course, it's desert in Sinai. But you can imagine what it's like to be

able to pass over the Earth and view all of biblical history, Old Testament history anyway, in one fell swoop here, everything from Abraham forward to the coming of Christ. You can see all of that.

Another view of Israel, this is the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem here, north is to the left, up here is the Temple Mount, so you can see kind of the square of the temple. There right there in the center is the Dome of the Rock, very interesting terrain there. And, of course, we know all of the events that occurred there and the meaningfulness of that. Paul's journeys, this is the Aegean Sea, a wide-angle view of the Aegean Sea. The Mediterranean, by the way, and the Aegean and the Adriatic are absolutely incredibly beautiful from space. Here is an oblique view of the boot of Italy right here. So Sicily is over here, there's the boot, so north is up here to the right; of course, where we know Paul's journeys ended. So you get a unique view to be able to contemplate redemptive history and to study the scriptures up there while you're up there. And view the places that Scripture records the events of redemption and redemptive history occurred.

Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 1. You remember in Job 26, the last verse I read, highlighted that when viewing God's creation, the wonder of the Earth hanging on nothing, what we call the terminator or the circle. Actually just the general description of God's creation, we saw in Job 26 and then he concludes but these re the outskirts of His ways. And here's Hebrews chapter 1, of course, very familiar to you, but I think this gives us an obvious glimpse of what goes beyond the glimpse that we saw in Job. Long ago, and John has done some wonderful preaching on this as well over the years, I remember he talked about this being in God's redemptive history, early part of history, it was like as if it was a whisper of God, right? And then the voice got louder and louder until the coming of Christ and His work on the cross is the shout of God. It's a great parallel to what Job talked about, with Creation being but a glimpse of what God has displayed of Himself.

Verse 1, "Long ago and many times in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets but in these last days He's spoken to us by His Son whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature and He upholds, or sustains the universe by the Word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

So I believe, as I know you do, that although we see but a glimpse of God's work in Creation, we get a fuller majesty of God's work in the personal work of His son, Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us as we so eloquently have heard already in the conference to justify us with the imputed righteousness of His before a holy God and I believe that even then in some sense is but a glimpse, right?, a glimpse looking toward eternity when we will have a full manifestation of the glory of God and be in His presence.

One final passage and I would like to use this to close as a prayer. That is Psalm 111. This Psalm, and you probably guessed earlier in the presentation that I love the Psalms and I know many of you do too. Psalm 111 probably captures the best some of the themes that I've attempted to communicate this afternoon. Psalm 111, and let's…read it with me if you get there and we'll use that as our closing prayer.

Praise the Lord, I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart in the company of the upright in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever. He has caused His wondrous works to be remembered, the Lord is gracious and merciful, He provides food for those who fear Him, He remembers His covenant forever. He has shown His people the power of His works in giving them the inheritance of the nations. The works of His hands are faithful and just, all the precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. He sent redemption to His people. He has commanded His Covenant forever. Holy and awesome is His name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever. Amen.

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