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FULL TRANSCRIPT:

Good afternoon. Thanks for being a part of this great family. Let's have some fun this afternoon. Are you ready for that? Let's get a chance to talk about some basic liberties. I want to give you some context. I'm a little bit of an odd duck coming into congress. I served 22 years in ministry before I came into congress. My wife and I called it life's greatest interpretation. We did not expect to be in congress at this point but felt that god called us to this. After 22 years of working with middle school, high school and college-age students, I was well prepared to work with the juveniles in congress, so it worked out extremely well in my own personal preparation for that. But I've come to it with a little different context. We as conservatives in some way have lost our way on some basic things. Conservatism has traditionally been about defense, about fiscal responsibility, and about faith. It's been the ability to be able to put all these things together. We are a people that are passionate about freedom.

Freedom for all people, all colors, all backgrounds, all economic situations, all faiths, everyone to be able to experience the freedom that we have. And that we have the opportunity to be able to enjoy. The constitution's a clear document when it gets around faith. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of a religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. Lots of folks want to twist that off in this day and age to it's freedom of worship. It's not freedom of worship. It's freedom to exercise your religion. And that's very, very different. For the people that would say, you can go in that spot and you can have worship however you want to, have missed completely the constitution. It's the ability to be able to live your faith out. Or to be able to have no faith at all. To be able to choose to live that out. For whatever reason, this culture at this time is missing some very basic things. One is this passion about faith. And who we are. If you looked at our government agencies, you would believe that the official religion of America is atheism. That was never the intent of the founders. It is for every individual to be able to live their faith out. Because we understood from the very beginning as Americans that god is older than government, god is bigger than government, and god will outlast government. Our rights don't come from government. Our rights come from god. And we have always believed that. To loosely quote coach Yost, speaking of coach Boone, and "Remember the titans" from the beginning we learn to see the soul of a man. Not just the look of him. I firmly believe religion and religious freedom does not exist because of America. America exists because of religious freedom. That's why we came to be.

Look at our history. Mayflower compact 1620. Having undertaken for the glory of god and the advancement of the Christian faith in the honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia. Look at our declaration of Independence. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, they're endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Virginia statute of religious freedom, 1779, some guy named Thomas Jefferson you might have heard of said, Al mighty god has created the mind free and free it shall remain. In the Jefferson memorial, if you ever get a chance to go there, do it, you stand in the Jefferson memorial, look at the northwest wall. And that wall, it says this, a quote from Thomas Jefferson. God who gave us life, gave us liberty. Account liberties of a nation be secure when we remove the conviction that these liberties are a gift of god? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that god is just. And his justice cannot sleep forever.

Thomas Jefferson. The embarkation of the pilgrims is a great painting, if you've ever walked in the capitol rotunda. You have an enormous painting of the beginning of America. It was put in place in 1843. It is literally older as a painting than the dome that is above it. And it is hung there even when that dome that's above it was being built, the painting was hanging there at that time. It depicts how America began as they saw it. And it began on the deck of a ship with a group of people huddled around an open bible praying. That's the painting that hangs in our capitol right now. About the earliest beginnings of our nation. The top of the Washington monument has this statement. Praise be to god. That's what it says. You've got to be fairly tall to be able to read it. But that's what it says on the outside of the Washington monument.

When you walk into C.I.A. Headquarters, which you're not allowed to do, but if you were allowed, look to your left. In Langley, Virginia, at C.I.A. Headquarters, etched into the marble there it says, and you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. When you stand in the house chamber, the words in god we trust are behind you and in front of you as the face of Moses looking back at you, every single day in the senate as we begin session we begin it in prayer. This has been a nation that hasn't been afraid of faith and hasn't been afraid that people could live their faith out until now. And for whatever reason, people are becoming afraid of religious liberty in this day and age. We as conservatives should lead the way. To be able to speak out for people to believe, of any faith, or to have no faith at all. Because it is a basic tenant of our beliefs, that people should be able to live out their faith. The striking thing is, right now in this culture, people now hear the words religious liberty and you know what they process? We say religious liberty, they hear anti-gay.

We say religious liberty, they say anti-choice. We say religious liberty and they say, anti-whatever. It's become an amazing transition, that people are beginning to be afraid of people of faith living their faith out. Why people would be afraid of a baby Jesus on the courthouse lawn or a menorah in a city park absolutely confounds me. We are people of faith. People can choose to live their faith as they choose to. There's a court hearing in a few weeks about a soldier that dared to put a scripture reference on their desk. That was a problem. If they had on their desk a little sign that said, don't worry, be happy, that wouldn't be a problem. But if the words are scripture, that suddenly became a problem. We're becoming a nation that is afraid of faith. Many of you know the story of coach Kennedy, who in Washington state dared to go after the game was over, as a high school coach, kneel down on the 50-yard-line and thank god that his players were protected and they had a good game. Silent prayer.

The school district came back to him and pushed him and said, you can't do that. If you pray and people can see you, it will be seen as an establishment of religion. So the school district offered for him to have a private place to pray in the press box after the game was over. Literally the state saying, I will choose the time and location of your prayer. We are a nation where you can pray at any spot, at any time. We do not have freedom of worship. We have freedom of religion. It is a basic principle of who we are. The challenge, is what do we do about it? And where with are? This freedom seems to be slipping away. How do you recover it? Let me give 2000 quick ideas. Number one is this, decide we as conservatives believe in the first amendment or not. First things first. If we believe in freedom of religion, that is all faiths. We stand for the person next to us to have a different faith than ours, and for their right to practice their faith. Because we have a right to practice ours.

I am completely confused by the number of people that don't like other faiths being around us. I'm fairly confident in my faith. I'm a Christian. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. He paid the penalty for me and with his resurrection showed his power over death and his ability to be able to pay for my sin and carry me to heaven forever. I'm not afraid of that. [Applause] It doesn't bother me for someone to sit next to me that disagrees with that. Why? Because I think I'm right, so that doesn't offend me. For people to panic that someone around them believes differently than them, this is America. We stand up for other purposes the freedom of individuals. It's a conservative principle of who we are. But the second thing I think is a bigger issue. We want to make a difference in this nation and freedom of religion, actually live your faith.

I'm amazed at the number of people that want to stand up for faith but don't actually live personally -- live it personally. I believe in Dr. Pepper. I have a refrigerator full of it and I actually drink it. I take it in. For those individuals that believe in people should have faith but actually don't choose to live their own faith, I'm confounded by that. There are folks that want to stand up for school prayer but they won't pray with their kids at night. There are folks that want to see the 10 commandments on the school house lawn or courthouse lawn but they lie and they cheat on things and they download free movies and steal those and I don't want to talk about adultery. There are people that aren't passing on these basic values. I believe in our nation, the greatest thing we can do as conservatives, to be able to push our nation back to faith, is for those of us that have faith to live our faith. You see, there's a big difference between faith and a hobby. A hobby is something you do on weekends but it doesn't affect your life. If it's a faith it affects everything about you. 1984, I was a high school student in Dallas, Texas.

I went to a convention, a Republican convention, in 1984, when a gentleman named Ronald Reagan was in his second convention. It was a great day. Very memorable day. But the not as memorable as the day I was also in high school and I remember kneeling down before god and saying, god, I accepted Christ when I was younger, but I've not determined in my life whether this is really real or not and the decision that I made to say, this is either real or it's not, and if it's real, I'm going to follow you. And I've chosen to follow him. For those of you that are of faith, it's time if we believe in faith that we actually live it. Let's live it out. God bless you all.