

*****Introduction*****

I love the truth of Ephesians 3:20—that “God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or imagine.”

In unbelievable and yet unexplainable ways, the truth of that scripture often plays out through the lives of seemingly ordinary men and women who respond to the inner call to lead.

Defeat cannot stop them. Being misunderstood won't slow them. Being reviled won't deter them.

There is a mission bigger than themselves that is growing within that requires immense grit to achieve what most think is impossible.

Ronald Reagan exemplified that with his life of service. And I, as an American, am very thankful for his leadership.

Leadership—more about that word later since witnessing the first 14 months of the Biden administration, I believe our country needs leadership now—just like we needed it in 1980.

I shudder to ask... if it were not for President Reagan's leadership, would that 6 ton piece of the Berlin Wall that's outside this building still be dividing East and West Germany.

Would it have taken decades longer to come down?

“A Time for Choosing.” There is not a more fitting theme for this time in American history.

As the progressive Left attempts to change the very DNA of our country and what it means to be an American, we need to answer a fundamental question Ronald Reagan posed to us in his “Time for Choosing” speech.

He asked us this question... “Do we believe in our capacity for self-government or do we abandon the American Revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far distant capitol can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves?”

Our nation has had a very challenging and difficult two years. We are emerging from a pandemic that cost people their lives, cost others their health, devastated our economy and further divided our country.

In the aftermath, the world emerging is chaotic and full of peril, both at home and abroad.

There are threats all around us, seeking to divide us, and in some cases, seeking to destroy what this nation stands for.

Under the Biden administration, our weaknesses on the world stage emboldened enemies like Vladimir Putin to launch an evil genocide against Ukraine. Women and children are being victimized, even targeted.

The Reagan Doctrine of “Peace Through Strength” is needed now just like it was during the Cold War.

At home, supply chains remain disrupted, the costs of basic necessities are skyrocketing, and our labor force participation rate is not keeping up.

People flourish when they have a plan, a purpose, and a paycheck.

It's no coincidence that the frustration, the anger, the disillusionment we are experiencing is manifesting itself in rising crime, apathy, and suicide rates... especially in our kids!

Americans are losing one of the most inspirational truths we have, which is hope.

Hope that things can and will get better, hope that education and hard work can equal prosperity, hope that we remain a City on a hill; a shining example of what can be when free people decide to join hands in self-governance.

This is not a partisan observation. This is reality and it is the natural consequence of what failed leadership feels like to the average worker on an average wage in our country.

America stands at a crossroads—with the potential for a great resetting, a renewal, even a rebirth—where we get to choose how we will meet the potential of today and the promise of tomorrow.

Will we step forward with strength and perseverance? Will we redouble our conviction in the power of ideas or will we shirk back and allow a great nation to be consumed and degraded?

Are we still that one nation under God? Are we truly indivisible? Is there liberty and justice for all? Or will we allow our differences to further divide us, to further weaken our resolve?

Will we, as our critics have warned, extinguish the light of liberty from within?

These are difficult questions for us to consider. But when I take a look at the arc of justice and liberty within America's history, I have every reason to hold on to hope.

With each and every challenge, our nation's track record is one of strength and unity.

Whether it be the Civil War, the Great Depression, the fight against Communism, or overcoming racial division—whatever is thrown our way—America has come through, time and time again, stronger and more united than ever before!

The reason for that is because our nation was founded on truth and truth never changes. And that's what the conservative movement is all about.

Conservatism doesn't flirt with what's easy and alluring. It doesn't tell people what they want to hear but what they ought to hear . . . because it is the truth.

Our party is the party of Abraham Lincoln—one of strength, endurance, and resiliency. It's the party of Ronald Reagan—one of hope, opportunity, and optimism.

We have struggled at times to present this message of conservatism with clarity and contrast. We have struggled at times to be messengers for what we know is true and timeless.

But if this is indeed the time for choosing, and it is, we have no choice but to lead the world with bravery, resolve, and strength. A strength that comes from the courage of our convictions, from a deep seated belief in our principles, and from being certain of what is true.

Conservatism understands that beliefs and truths do not ebb and flow with election cycles. That our fight is not merely about 2022 and 2024. But it's about our future as a country and therefore the future of the world.

And that's why we must endeavor to captivate the hearts and minds of the American people.

*******Personal Story*******

I know the power of this because, when I needed it the most, I experienced it.

As a kid growing up in North Charleston, South Carolina, I was raised in a single parent household, mired in poverty.

My parents got divorced when I was seven years old. We were living on an Air Force base in Michigan.

I was devastated—I felt like my whole world was coming to an end. We moved back to North Charleston and in with my grandparents.

They lived in a 700 square foot home, with 2 bedrooms. Me, my mom, and my brother shared one bedroom and one bed.

The house was filled with love but it was tough.

Have any of you had a bad week? Well, I had a bad 7 years.

From the time I was 7 until I was 14 and a freshman in high school, I drifted.

How many of you know that all drifting leads in the wrong direction?

I was angry and discouraged and so, my freshman year I failed four subjects.

I failed World Geography and Civics. Now Civics is the study of Politics.

And I must tell you that after spending 9 years in the United States Senate, I've learned I am not the only one failing Civics in the Senate!

I also failed Spanish AND English—now when you fail Spanish AND English no one calls you bilingual.

They call you bi-ignorant because you can't speak in any language.

And that's where I found my unhappy self. But I had two major blessings in my life! These two blessings came from completely different backgrounds and had different experiences.

One was a praying momma. My mom worked 16 hours a day three days a week and 8 hours a day the other two to put food on the table and to keep the lights on, usually.

She was a nurse's aide—changing bed pans and flipping patients.

She taught us a lesson that America needs now—that there is dignity in all work.

She would come home late and try to encourage me. She'd say, "Timmy, if you'd just shoot for the moon even if you missed, you'd be among the stars." If I heard it once I heard it a thousand times.

Well, after I failed my freshman year, she came home and saw my report card.

She woke me up—looked at me—looked at my report card—then looked at me again and said, "Timmy get up and come with me."

I figured she was taking me outside to show me the stars, so I said with a little attitude, “I know momma, I know if I just shoot for the moon, even if I miss I’ll be among the stars.”

She said, “No Timmy, you missed that lesson. Tonight I’m going to teach you a different lesson.”

She told me to walk to a tree and pick a branch—so I did.

She said tear the leaves off—I said momma why would we tear the leaves off? She said, “You’re getting ready to find out.”

So I took the leaves off.

She then introduced me to a new form of encouragement known as “The Switch.”

Now we are in California and if you are not from the South, let me explain what a switch is—a switch is a Southern Apparatus of Encouragement.

It’s applied from here to about here.

And I must tell you that I was thoroughly encouraged!

I went to summer school, got caught up, graduated on time and went to college.

And I can further tell you that I NEVER failed another class again. EVER.

This is one of the reasons why I'm so passionate about the GOP being THE PARTY OF PARENTS and ensuring parents have a say in their kids' education.

We are going to fight for educational excellence in EVERY SINGLE zip code, because your zip code should not determine the quality of your education.

I would not have graduated from high school if it were not for the involvement of my mother!

One of the small silver linings of the pandemic is that more parents are more engaged in education than ever before. Parents have a right to know what their kids are being taught in the classroom.

Teaching kids that they are oppressors is just as bad as teaching kids they are always going to be victims.

If a mom can't read a book at a school board meeting because it's too vulgar, why in the world would we allow our kids to read it in the classroom? To fix that we should demand that parents have access to their child's curriculum.

Furthermore, we need to make sure that parents are fully equipped with the best options in the poorest areas so that their kids have access to a good quality education.

Education is the closest thing to magic in America! The path to prosperity, self-worth, and independence is literally paved with education.

We should be the party of education and NEVER LET THAT MANTLE SLIP THROUGH OUR GRASP.

The second blessing in my life touches upon another important pillar—economic freedom.

After my sophomore year, I met a man named John Moniz—a White guy, a Chick Fil-A operator, and a conservative.

John saw something in me that I could not see in myself. He taught me basic principles like...

Having a job is a good thing but creating jobs is a better thing.

He taught me that having an income is good, but creating a profit is even better. I can still hear him say, “Profits are better than wages!”

Now remember I was a teenager and these principles were new to me.

I worked at the movie theatre next to his Chick-fil-A, and he noticed one day that I would only buy the French fries.

I didn't have the money to buy the sandwich.

So one day he came over to the concession stand and slid a Chick-fil-A sandwich across the counter, sat down and just started talking to me.

He invested in me—there was no formal program—just a man trying to make a difference in the life of a kid—and he did.

He too made me take responsibility—he told me if I didn't like where I was in life, look in the mirror and blame myself.

He said don't blame your mom because she's working 16 hours a day

Don't blame your dad because he's not around.

Look in the mirror, he said, because if I did, I may find the problem but I'll also find the promise. If I see the obstacles, I will also see the opportunity!

He told me that ANYONE, from ANYWHERE at ANYTIME could rise beyond their wildest imagination.

His lessons took root and I began understanding what he was teaching me.

Tragically the first 4 years of my new life would be the last 4 years of his life.

And two months shy of his 38th birthday, my mentor was gone.

John had set a goal to positively impact the lives of a million people. So to honor him, at the age of 19—the night before his funeral, I sat down and wrote my life’s mission statement.

I set a goal to positively impact the lives of a BILLION people—with the message of hope and opportunity.

Hope being my faith in Christ Jesus.

And opportunity—the lessons John taught me about financial literacy. Financial literacy and the American Dream are as inseparable as wet and water. When you have one, you have the other.

*******Economic Security*******

Unfortunately for too many people today, the American Dream seems further and further out of reach.

We’ve all heard it’s been said that elections have consequences.

In December, 2020, I could drive into a gas station in my home state of South Carolina and gas was \$1.99 per gallon.

In less than a year into the Biden administration, gas prices at the pump, jumped to \$3.40 per gallon.

Now it’s over 6 dollars per gallon in California and almost 4 dollars per gallon in South Carolina.

Since the 2020 election, Democrats have pumped trillions of dollars into our economy—creating inflation, an invisible tax that’s hitting our most vulnerable populations the hardest: single moms, seniors on fixed incomes, and people living pay check to pay check.

President Reagan once said, “Inflation is as violent as a mugger, as frightening as an armed robber and as deadly as a hit man.”

We can do better for the American people—and we have done better.

From 2016 to 2020, we reformed the regulatory state—making it responsible, but not burdensome.

I am grateful to have been one of four senators charged with the task of reforming our tax code and the principal architect for modifying the personal side of the code.

We cut single moms’ taxes on average nearly 70% and dual-income households by almost 60%. Those tax cuts led to the average family keeping nearly \$4,000 more of their hard-earned money.

We lowered the corporate income tax rate from 35% to 21% which UNLEASHED the American economy.

We implemented my Opportunity Zone program to ensure vulnerable communities have better access to economic investment.

In just the first full year of Opportunity Zones, 2019, we saw 29 billion in private sector dollars invested in low-income, high poverty, majority minority areas.

When we were in leadership, we advanced the most inclusive economy in the history of this country—creating 7 million jobs—thanks to tax reform and regulatory certainty.

Unemployment hit a record low for African-Americans, under 6%, for Hispanics under 5% and Asian-Americans, under 3%. For women, it was the lowest it's been in nearly 70 years.

Wages were growing faster for the bottom 25 percent than the top 25 percent.

And oh by the way, revenue to the Treasury increased AFTER we lowered taxes—no one on the left wants you to know that.

And guess who would not have been surprised—President Ronald Reagan.

The numbers don't lie. The GOP, the Great Opportunity Party, when in leadership, we deliver for the American people.

On the flip side of that, Democrats' leadership has led to a 40-year high in inflation, and they're still pouring more money on this crisis.

That's not good for moms making decisions in homes like the one I grew up in.

President Biden says he wants to lower costs by raising wages. It's more evidence that Democrats do not understand how the free market system works.

As a man who actually ran a business, I know that you increase wages by improving productivity so that you have more on the bottom line, and with those extra resources you can increase income and benefits.

In order for the American economy to grow, we need to get people coming back to the workforce—not leaving it.

Today, we have more jobs open than people looking for work. Meanwhile Democrats in Los Angeles are paying people \$1,000 a month of so called “UBI”—Universal Basic Income—to stay home!

We need to restore the DIGNITY OF WORK.

How do we do that? We do it by providing more incentives for people to come back to work.

We do it by expanding the definition of “workforce” to include gig workers—ride-share drivers and food deliverers.

We want to make sure that the workers of the future have a say in where they work, when they work, how much they work, and what their benefits are.

Meanwhile, Democrats continue to push failed policies that force employees into restrictive unions to promote their own political purposes.

90 percent of union political dollars go to Democrats while 40 percent of union households vote for Republicans.

Democrats want to eliminate right-to-work laws in 27 states, ushering in a new wave of unions.

That's wrong for our workers, wrong for our economy, and wrong for our country.

Workers want flexibility and they want to build a workplace around their families and personal time.

Conservatives can help them accomplish that through common-sense reforms and incentives that focus on the future and not the past.

*******Global/Russia*******

When I look around today, it honestly feels as if we've gotten into a time machine and traveled back to the Carter era of the 1970s—that's when the term "misery index" was born.

I remember the 1970s and the rationing of supplies due to weak economic policies and weak leadership in the White House.

I remember the Iran hostage crisis and every day that went by where American citizens were left in harm's way.

Those Americans were released the day Ronald Reagan was sworn in as President—this was not a coincidence!

Joe Biden... they told us... was the most experienced person in matters of foreign policy to ever seek the presidency.

What they forgot to tell us is experience and acumen are two different things.

And our country and the world are bearing the consequences of Joe Biden being experienced... in being wrong.

President Biden's weakness on the global stage has emboldened terrorists, bullies, and dictators.

In Afghanistan, we had a botched withdrawal that cost 13 American soldiers their lives and left thousands of Americans stranded there.

In Iran, after President TRUMP'S wise decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal, the Biden administration is having Russia negotiate a new deal on our behalf.

All the while, our adversaries in Venezuela, North Korea, Cuba and China are watching how the Biden administration continues to mishandle global affairs.

And what about Russia?

What we're seeing from Vladimir Putin is pure evil, and it must be stopped.

The images of children and families seeking refuge in the middle of Putin's vicious attacks are simply heart breaking.

We're all inspired by the Ukrainian people—the freedom-loving, liberty-defending Ukrainians bravely fighting for their home.

President Zelensky has impressively led his people into an awe-inspiring defense of their homeland.

But more must be done on the international stage to support the Ukrainian people, including providing them with the weapons they need for a successful defense.

The West is working together to squeeze Putin and his regime for this unprovoked and dangerous attack—that's a good thing.

But I would argue those steps came too late.

The Biden administration placed misguided hope in the hands of diplomats while military leaders were arguing for a forceful approach.

And Biden's decision to block the Keystone XL pipeline put us at a huge disadvantage when Russia invaded Ukraine.

Hear me clearly... energy independence is necessary for our national security.

But rather than opening up energy production here at home, the Biden administration fiddled with the idea of shifting from one dictator in Russia to another in Venezuela or Iran to increase our oil supply.

This would once again compromise our national security.

The world—and the American people—need responsible, steady leadership in this moment of crisis.

Blood thirsty dictators like Putin only understand strength, and that's what we must project from the United States.

America remains the most important and powerful defender of democracy in the world—a responsibility we must take seriously.

As the son of a Vietnam veteran, the brother of a man who served in Desert Storm, and another brother who graduated from the Air Force Academy and retired as a colonel, what I fully understand is that INDEED... PEACE COMES THROUGH STRENGTH.

During my Senate service, I've had the great privilege of serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

My family's service and my experience on the SASC reinforced the need to strengthen our military capabilities and expand our resources.

What I learned through my family's nearly 100 years of military experience is that it's not just about the here and now, but about preparation and training for future threats.

My brother Ben, a Command Sergeant Major, who served in the U.S. Army for 32 years, said to me, "When we decide to go to war, it's too late to 'get ready.'"

We must never be caught unprepared for the fight. If we cannot engage... in multiple conflicts across the globe... at the same time... then we are not prepared to carry out our responsibilities for the future.

The reality is, today's warfare does not look like it did in the mid-1900s or early 2000s.

Modern warfare includes cyberattacks, artificial intelligence, undetectable weapons like hypersonic flight, and more.

There is no need to sugarcoat it. We are falling behind.

Both China and Russia have been testing hypersonic missiles that pose significant threats to the United States and our allies.

Hypersonic missiles travel at over five times the speed of sound, can be maneuvered while in flight, and remain largely undetected.

Modern missile defense systems will be made obsolete by these types of missiles and the United States needs to do more to understand and develop defenses against these weapons.

Our president must commit to a defense budget that invests in new 21st century technologies and accounts for 21st century threats.

*******Border*******

Speaking of our national security, far too little attention has been paid to the security threat at our Southern border.

When we allow people to cross our border illegally, we bring a great security risk to our country!

The border crisis is clearly an immigration crisis. 2021 was a record breaking year—with roughly 2 million people caught crossing illegally.

When President Biden speaks of reforms, it's eliminating Title 42 with no plan to deal with the influx of illegal border crossings.

Even the Biden administration predicts an increase of 18,000 border crossings PER DAY with the elimination of Title 42—more than doubling last year's records.

We need a physical barrier on our Southern border, and we must deploy smart technology to aid law enforcement in their efforts to secure our border.

We've also seen the effects of weak border policies when it comes to drug trafficking. Traffickers are bringing fentanyl across our border with deadly consequences.

The Biden administration's policies encourage vulnerable people to travel to our border, which only exacerbates the growing humanitarian crisis.

The policies of today must always take into account the threats of tomorrow and ensure we are keeping Americans safe, both at home and abroad.

*******Enduring Challenges*******

America was founded on the life changing power of freedom, opportunity, and hope.

Have we always gotten it right? Certainly not. But have we made extreme progress along the way? Absolutely. Will we continue to make even more progress into the future? You better believe it!

Understanding our history has never been more important—

Not rewriting it for 1619 or reframing it as the oppressed versus the oppressors—but understanding the challenges we've faced

and the price we've paid to become a beacon of hope to the world.

An uncomfortable truth about our history is that, at times, human behavior collided with our better angels.

Our history bears the scars of considering Black Americans like me 3/5ths of a human.

It took a Civil War and the Civil Rights era to pave the way toward adopting the self-evident truth found in our Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal.

America may be the only country on earth that fought a Civil War to set people free!

One passage I admire from Lincoln's second inaugural address, is where he talks about the importance of not only battling the Civil War, but winning it for the future of our great nation.

He states: "Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.

Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said:

'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish, a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

His words remain powerful and inspirational even today.

When we look at the past, we must acknowledge the significant progress we've made.

My grandfather was the closest living relative that I knew who suffered the abuses of a very different America.

When he was growing up, he wasn't even allowed to use the same sidewalk as a white person. He spent his days picking cotton to help his family get by.

But he believed in the goodness of America—miraculously he always remained hopeful because he believed **THEN what even some doubt NOW**: that better days were ahead.

He had only a 3rd grade education—he needed to work to help his family and there was not much need for an educated Black man in the south.

Fast forward 5 decades—after we moved in with my grandparents, he would sit at the kitchen table every morning reading the newspaper. He would read every single page...

It wasn't until many years later that I learned that my granddaddy never learned how to read.

He was impressing upon my brother and me the importance of education.

And during my grandfather's lifetime—he was able to go from picking cotton as a kid to watching his grandson pick out a seat in Congress and then the United States Senate.

Our story, my story, is the American story: A story of hope and redemption.

*******Closing*******

Tonight we're here in this majestic setting with the legacy of Ronald Reagan lingering . . . charting a new course using a familiar map for the party of Abraham Lincoln.

We are the party of freedom, of strength, of personal responsibility and economic empowerment.

We are the party of individual liberty, upward mobility, and the party that knows we are a nation of laws, not men—

But a nation of laws needs strong women and men to enforce that law in a fair and just way.

Yes, we have the right ideas, but even so we find ourselves in a state the Republican Party has not carried in 35 years, in a nation

divided, in a political environment where pessimism has supplanted optimism and hope.

It is easy to be daunted... discouraged ... even demoralized. But do not.

Our ideas are timeless because the truth is timeless. We must believe that. We must believe that our ideas and beliefs can stand the test of time.

We must have courage in our convictions and know that conservatism is more than an election strategy.

It is more than simply a series of campaign promises.

Conservatism is a set of deeply held beliefs that when properly communicated, when faithfully implemented... **WHEN ACTUALLY LIVED** can change your life and the life of a country.

Conservatism is not easy. Few things worth pursuing in life are easy. Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan both wore the marks of their beliefs and convictions.

Both were ridiculed, both were mocked, both were shot, and one was killed. And yet their legacies linger as a light guiding us toward that more perfect union.

I believe in conservatism because it changed my life.

It was education, hard work, and faith that allowed my family to go from cotton to Congress in one lifetime

It was education, hard work, and faith that allowed a grandfather who could not read or write to ride to the polls and cast a vote for his own grandson, a grandson who would be reading and writing bills and legislation, who would meet with presidents and Supreme Court justices.

This is America. That is the power of what we believe.

Conservatism is my personal proof there is no ceiling in life. I can go as high as my character, my education, and my perseverance will take me.

I bear witness to that. I testify to that.

So, for those of you on the Left, you can call me a prop, you can call me a token, you can call me the N word, you can question my blackness, you can even call me Uncle Tim.

Just understand what you call me is no match for the proof of my life.

Your words are no match for my evidence.

Your pessimism is no match for the truth of my history.

I will continue to boldly proclaim this truth from every mountain top, then I will do so from the deepest valley.

I will do it from the boardroom to the class room. I will do it from an auditorium surrounded by friends and an inner city church surrounded by skeptics.

I believe it because I have lived it. I have lived the original dream. I have held the truth, the unalienable truth, that all men and women are created equal and endowed with the right to be free.

I am not merely a believer in the principles of conservatism, I am an eye witness.

I bear testimony that America can do for you what it has done for me.

So if it is a time for choosing, that is what I have chosen.

The power, the life changing power of freedom and hope and opportunity.

Will you choose it with me? Will you join me as a messenger, a missionary for the power of our ideas?

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