**Transcript: Ted Cruz’s speech at Liberty University**

**March 23, 2015**

CRUZ: Good to see you.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

Thank you so much, President Falwell. God bless Liberty University.

(APPLAUSE)

I am thrilled to join you today at the largest Christian university in the world.

(APPLAUSE)

Today I want to talk with you about the promise of America.

Imagine your parents when they were children. Imagine a little girl growing up in Wilmington, Delaware during World War II, the daughter of Irish and Italian Catholic family, working class. Her uncle ran numbers in Wilmington. She grew up with dozens of cousins because her mom was the second youngest of 17 kids. She had a difficult father, a man who drank far too much, and frankly didn’t think that women should be educated.

And yet this young girl, pretty and shy, was driven, was bright, was inquisitive, and she became the first person in her family ever to go to college. In 1956, my mom, Eleanor, graduated from Rice University with a degree in math and became a pioneering computer programmer in the 1950s and 1960s.

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine a teenage boy, not much younger than many of you here today, growing up in Cuba. Jet black hair, skinny as a rail.

(LAUGHTER)

Involved in student council, and yet Cuba was not at a peaceful time. The dictator, Batista, was corrupt, he was oppressive. And this teenage boy joins a revolution. He joins a revolution against Batista, he begins fighting with other teenagers to free Cuba from the dictator. This boy at age 17 finds himself thrown in prison, finds himself tortured, beaten. And then at age 18, he flees Cuba, he comes to America.

Imagine for a second the hope that was in his heart as he rode that ferry boat across to Key West, and got on a Greyhound bus to head to Austin, Texas to begin working, washing dishes, making 50 cents an hour, coming to the one land on earth that has welcomed so many millions.

When my dad came to America in 1957, he could not have imagined what lay in store for him. Imagine a young married couple, living together in the 1970s, neither one of them has a personal relationship with Jesus. They have a little boy and they are both drinking far too much. They are living a fast life.

When I was three, my father decided to leave my mother and me. We were living in Calgary at the time, he got on a plane and he flew back to Texas, and he decided he didn’t want to be married anymore and he didn’t want to be a father to his 3-year-old son. And yet when he was in Houston, a friend, a colleague from the oil and gas business invited him to a Bible study, invited him to Clay Road (ph) Baptist Church, and there my father gave his life to Jesus Christ.

(APPLAUSE)

And God transformed his heart. And he drove to the airport, he bough a plane ticket, and he flew back to be with my mother and me.

(APPLAUSE)

There are people who wonder if faith is real. I can tell you, in my family there’s not a second of doubt, because were it not for the transformative love of Jesus Christ, I would have been saved and I would have been raised by a single mom without my father in the household.

Imagine another little girl living in Africa, in Kenya and Nigeria. That’s a diverse crowd.

(LAUGHTER)

Playing with kids, they spoke Swahili, she spoke English. Coming back to California.

(APPLAUSE)

Where her parents who had been missionaries in Africa raised her on the Central Coast. She starts a small business when she’s in grade school baking bread. She calls it Heidi’s Bakery. She and her brother compete baking bread. They bake thousands of loaves of bread and go to the local apple orchard where they sell the bread to people coming to pick apples. She goes on to a career in business, excelling and rising to the highest pinnacles, and then Heidi becomes my wife and my very best friend in the world.

(APPLAUSE)

Heidi becomes an incredible mom to our two precious little girls, Caroline and Catherine, the joys and loves of our life.

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine another teenage boy being raised in Houston, hearing stories from his dad about prison and torture in Cuba, hearing stories about how fragile liberty is, beginning to study the United States Constitution, learning about the incredible protections we have in this country that protect the God-given liberty of every American. Experiencing challenges at home.

In the 1980s, oil prices crater and his parents business go bankrupt. Heading off to school over a thousand miles away from home, in a place where he knew nobody, where he was alone and scared, and his parents going through bankruptcy meant there was no financial support at home, so at the age of 17, he went to get two jobs to help pay his way through school.

He took over $100,000 in school loans, loans I suspect a lot of ya’ll can relate to, loans that I’ll point out I just paid off a few years ago.

(APPLAUSE)

These are all of our stories. These are who we are as Americans.

And yet, for so many Americans, the promise of America seems more and more distant. What is the promise of America? The idea that -- the revolutionary idea that this country was founded upon, which is that our rights don’t come from man. They come from God Almighty.

(APPLAUSE)

And that the purpose of the Constitution, as Thomas Jefferson put it, is to serve as chains to bind the mischief of government.

(APPLAUSE)

The incredible opportunity of the American dream, what has enabled millions of people from all over the world to come to America with nothing and to achieve anything. And then the American exceptionalism that has made this nation a clarion voice for freedom in the world, a shining city on a hill.

That’s the promise of America. That is what makes this nation an indispensable nation, a unique nation in the history of the world.

And yet, so many fear that that promise is today unattainable. So many fear it is slipping away from our hands.

I want to talk to you this morning about reigniting the promise of America: 240 years ago on this very day, a 38-year-old lawyer named Patrick Henry...

(APPLAUSE)

... stood up just a hundred miles from here in Richmond, Virginia...

(APPLAUSE)

... and said, “Give me liberty or give me death.”

(APPLAUSE) I want to ask each of you to imagine, imagine millions of courageous conservatives, all across America, rising up together to say in unison “we demand our liberty.”

(APPLAUSE)

Today, roughly half of born again Christians aren’t voting. They’re staying home. Imagine instead millions of people of faith all across America coming out to the polls and voting our values.

(APPLAUSE)

Today millions of young people are scared, worried about the future, worried about what the future will hold. Imagine millions of young people coming together and standing together, saying “we will stand for liberty.”

(APPLAUSE)

Think just how different the world would be. Imagine instead of economic stagnation, booming economic growth.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of small businesses going out of business in record numbers, imagine small businesses growing and prospering. Imagine young people coming out of school with four, five, six job offers.

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine innovation thriving on the Internet as government regulators and tax collectors are kept at bay and more and more opportunity is created.

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine America finally becoming energy self-sufficient as millions and millions of high-paying jobs are created.

(APPLAUSE)

Five years ago today, the president signed Obamacare into law.

AUDIENCE: Boo.

Within hours, Liberty University went to court filing a lawsuit to stop that failed law.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of the joblessness, instead of the millions forced into part-time work, instead of the millions who’ve lost their health insurance, lost their doctors, have faced skyrocketing health insurance premiums, imagine in 2017 a new president signing legislation repealing every word of Obamacare.

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine health care reform that keeps government out of the way between you and your doctor and that makes health insurance personal and portable and affordable.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a tax code that crushes innovation, that imposes burdens on families struggling to make ends met, imagine a simple flat tax...

(APPLAUSE)

... that lets every American fill out his or her taxes on a postcard.

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine abolishing the IRS.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of the lawlessness and the president’s unconstitutional executive amnesty, imagine a president that finally, finally, finally secures the borders.

(APPLAUSE)

And imagine a legal immigration system that welcomes and celebrates those who come to achieve the American dream.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a federal government that wages an assault on our religious liberty, that goes after Hobby Lobby, that goes after the Little Sisters of the Poor, that goes after Liberty University, imagine a federal government that stands for the First Amendment rights of every American.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a federal government that works to undermine our values, imagine a federal government that works to defend the sanctity of human life...

(APPLAUSE)

... and to uphold the sacrament of marriage.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a government that works to undermine our Second Amendment rights, that seeks to ban our ammunition...

(APPLAUSE)

... imagine a federal government that protects the right to keep and bear arms of all law-abiding Americans.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a government that seizes your e-mails and your cell phones, imagine a federal government that protected the privacy rights of every American.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a federal government that seeks to dictate school curriculum through Common Core...

(APPLAUSE)

... imagine repealing every word of Common Core.

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine embracing school choice as the civil rights issue of the next generation...

(APPLAUSE)

... that every single child, regardless of race, regardless of ethnicity, regardless of wealth or ZIP Code, every child in America has the right to a quality education.

(APPLAUSE)

And that’s true from all of the above, whether is public schools, or charter schools, or private schools, or Christian schools, or parochial schools, or home schools, every child.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a president who boycotts Prime Minister Netanyahu, imagine a president who stands unapologetically with the nation of Israel.

(APPLAUSE)

Instead of a president who seeks to go to the United Nations to end-run Congress and the American people...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That’s horrible.

CRUZ: ... imagine a president who says “I will honor the Constitution, and under no circumstances will Iran be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon.”

(APPLAUSE)

Imagine a president who says “We will stand up and defeat radical Islamic terrorism...”

(APPLAUSE)

“... and we will call it by its name.”

(APPLAUSE)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That’s right.

CRUZ: “We will defend the United States of America.”

(APPLAUSE)

Now, all of these seem difficult, indeed to some they may seem unimaginable, and yet if you look in the history of our country, imagine it’s 1775, and you and I were sitting there in Richmond listening to Patrick Henry say give me liberty or give me death.

Imagine it’s 1776 and we were watching the 54 signers of the Declaration of Independence stand together and pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to igniting the promise of America.

Imagine it was 1777 and we were watching General Washington as he lost battle, after battle, after battle in the freezing cold as his soldiers with no shoes were dying, fighting for freedom against the most powerful army in the world. That, too, seemed unimaginable.

Imagine it’s 1933 and we were listening to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt tell America at a time of crushing depression, at a time of a gathering storm abroad, that we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

Imagine it’s 1979 and you and I were listening to Ronald Reagan.

(APPLAUSE)

And he was telling us that we would cut the top marginal tax rates from 70 percent all the way down to 28 percent, that we would go from crushing stagnation to booming economic growth, to millions being lifted out of poverty and into prosperity abundance. That the very day that he was sworn in, our hostages who were languishing in Iran would be released. And that within a decade we would win the Cold War and tear the Berlin Wall to the ground.

That would have seemed unimaginable, and yet, with the grace of God, that’s exactly what happened.

(APPLAUSE)

From the dawn of this country, at every stage America has enjoyed God’s providential blessing. Over and over again, when we face impossible odds, the American people rose to the challenge. You know, compared to that, repealing Obamacare and abolishing the IRS ain’t all that tough.

(LAUGHTER)

The power of the American people when we rise up and stand for liberty knows no bounds.

(APPLAUSE)

If you’re ready to join a grassroots army across this nation, coming together and standing for liberty, I’m going to ask you to break a rule here today and to take out your cell phones, and to text the word constitution to the number 33733. You can also text imagine. We’re versatile.

Once again, text constitution to 33733. God’s blessing has been on America from the very beginning of this nation, and I believe God isn’t done with America yet.

(APPLAUSE)

I believe in you. I believe in the power of millions of courageous conservatives rising up to reignite the promise of America, and that is why today I am announcing that I’m running for president of the United States.

(APPLAUSE)

It is a time for truth. It is a time for liberty. It is a time to reclaim the Constitution of the United States.

(APPLAUSE)

I am honored to stand with each and every one of you courageous conservatives as we come together to reclaim the promise of America, to reclaim the mandate, the hope and opportunity for our children and our children’s children. We stand together for liberty.

(APPLAUSE)

CRUZ: This is our fight. The answer will not come from Washington. It will come only from the men and women across this country, from men and women, from people of faith, from lovers of liberty, from people who respect the Constitution.

It will only come as it has come at every other time of challenge in this country, when the American people stand together and say we will get back to the principles that have made this country great. We will get back and restore that shining city on a hill that is the United States of America.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you and God bless you.

Washington Post. 2015. “Transcript: Ted Cruz’s speech at Liberty University.” Accessed March 18, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/transcript-ted-cruzs-speech-at-liberty- university/2015/03/23/41c4011a-d168-11e4-a62f-ee745911a4ff\_story.html