



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Calling the Church to Courage – Part 2

Guest(s): Eric Metaxas

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. If you were with us on yesterday's program, you heard the first part of a dynamic two-part presentation given by our guest, Eric Metaxas. This was a talk he gave at a recent event here in Colorado Springs.

He's calling the church to act boldly and courageously, so as not to repeat the similar mistakes the German church made right before the Holocaust occurred. Eric Metaxas is a bestselling author, speaker and conservative radio talk show host. You may be familiar with many of his books, including *Is Atheism Dead?* *Seven Men* and *Bonhoeffer*.

You may have read his articles in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, or seen him as a featured, cultural commentator on CNN and Fox News. Eric, of course, is also the host of *The Eric Metaxas Show*. In today's presentation, he'll be referencing his latest book entitled *Letter to the American Church*.

Right now, let's join Eric Metaxas for the conclusion of his powerful presentation. That's coming up now, right here on Family Talk.

Eric Metaxas: The Nazis took over and the key, of course, was the Nazis said, "We just need the church to keep sleeping because eventually, it'll be game over." If they wake up, it's like Gulliver being tied down by the Lilliputians. The Lilliputians, if Gulliver wakes up, they're trying to tie down Gulliver, Gulliver will crush them.

But if they can just keep him sleeping a little longer, a little longer, and keep tying him down, keep tying him down, keep tying him down, eventually it's over. He can't get up. It's over. There's no doubt that Hitler understood that with the German church. He said, "If the German church wakes up, we're in trouble, but if we can just keep them sleeping." He had contempt for the Lutheran pastors.

He had contempt for the church. He would not reveal that. He would just talk a nice game, talk a nice game, just pretend like that religious stuff is just separate. It's just separate. Now, Martin Niemoller, I write about this, the sequel to this book is called *Religionist Christianity: God's Answer to Evil*, which will be out in April, but in that book, I tell the story of Martin Niemoller.

Of course, I tell the story in my *Bonhoeffer* book, but Martin Niemoller is the classic case because he was a genuinely good man, a genuinely wonderful pastor, who got this wrong just long enough. Then one day, he had a private meeting with Hitler, and he was convinced it's the people around Hitler who are really against the church. It's not Hitler.

If I can only just get some time with him. I'm a World War I hero, a decorated hero, he'll listen to me. He gave me a firm promise months before he was elected, Hitler did, that he would not bother the churches, he would not institute pogroms against the Jews. He gave me his word, and I think it's probably the people around him that are really the secular, the troublemakers.

Niemoller gets a meeting with Hitler finally in early '34. In that meeting, now Hitler's been chancellor over a year, he meets a different person. Hitler effectively threatens him, and they had his phone tapped and they read the transcript of his conversation. Hermann Goring read the transcript of the conversation just to let him know like, "We've got your number. We heard what you said.

"You cracked some jokes we didn't like. You could be in a concentration camp yesterday, so you better play ball, Pastor." Niemoller was so taken aback to see the true face of evil, he thought, "I'm going to reason with this guy." He says, "Well, Mein Fuhrer, we love the Third Reich, we want to help you. We love Germany."

Hitler says to him, and this is almost like it was scripted in a movie, "I built the Third Reich. You just worry about your sermons." In other words, "We are not interested in the church's opinion. Just shut up and preach your dead, little sermons in your little church in that building. When you come out, you bow to the secular authority of the state."

In other words, that's the devil's idea of the Christian faith. We keep ourselves in a little theological box. We do our little rituals. This is the official communist Chinese position of the church, "Oh, we'll let you have church. You go into your little building, do your little weird little rituals. We have no problem with that. But when you come out, you bow to the secular authority of the atheistic state."

Well, any church that can go along with that bargain, is not the church of Jesus Christ. We are commanded by God to take our faith out of that building and into every single sphere, including the political. The values of God are meant to be

brought to bear in every sphere, including and often especially the political sphere.

When Niemoller realized that Hitler all along was saying like, "Just play your little religious game. Don't dare try to bring your Christian values into the Third Reich." Look, we've seen this all through history. When Christians bring their values into the public sphere, you know what happens. Things like slavery get abolished. Murdering the unborn will get abolished if Christians have their way.

If Christians have their way, the poor will be blessed. Christian values bless people, bless cultures, but if you're authoritarian government, you're not interested in Christian values. You're interested in power. The Nazis knew if we could just keep the church sleeping just long enough, long enough and effectively, by the time Niemoller understood what was happening, it was already too late.

That's how short the window was for action. Bonhoeffer was trying to get the church to see this and they didn't see it, they didn't see it, they didn't see it. Then eventually he knew it's over. We've dithered, we have bought this religious lie that our faith is just theological. It's just we just believe these things. It's just about getting people saved.

In the book, *Letter to the American Church*, I have a chapter called the Idol of Evangelism. How many of us have bought this lie that the only thing that matters is getting people saved? That's not biblical. We're supposed to make disciples. If you're not making disciples, we all know you can be a shallow convert in five minutes. You can lose what little faith you had.

But we have this very American idea, "How many numbers did we get? How many people signed the comment cards and we got a lot of people saved." Well, the Lord calls us to make disciples, and then He calls us to live our lives in utter obedience to Him in every sphere. That's a little different than our happy-clappy, "We got people saved. It was really great."

Yeah, it's great if you follow through. Bonhoeffer said, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." We are called to die to self. Now, if you know who the Lord is, you say it's a good trade. I die to self and His resurrection life comes to live in me, and then I can live truly for the first time and I will live forever. You are genuinely free when you die to self, but you have to die to self.

Bonhoeffer tried to wake up the German church. Obviously, he failed. But I know that the American church similarly, has been confronted with evils and has said the same thing. Has said, "We don't want to be political. We don't want to get involved in that." God is speaking to His church and telling us that we are to live out our faith now, and this lie that we're just supposed to preach the gospel.

No, no, no. We're to be the conscience of the nation and God calls us to that. If we preach the gospel and people get saved and start living out their faith that way, it changes culture. There's so many examples from history. The revolution wouldn't have happened. We would've never come into being in the first place as a nation, if not for tremendous evangelism under the preaching of George Whitefield.

In my book, *If You Can Keep It*, I talk about the preaching of George Whitefield in the 18th century up and down the Thirteen Colonies. I joke around, I say that he was such an amazing evangelist, which is true, that he actually makes Billy Graham and the Apostle Paul look a little bit like lazy agnostics. Just so you get the picture of the whirlwind, the crazy whirlwind that was George Whitefield.

But he preached the gospel so effectively up and down the Thirteen Colonies, that the founders understood that these people really love God. Enough people got religion, there was enough revival up and down the Thirteen Colonies, that all of the founders understood that those kind of people could conceivably govern themselves. Because I write about *The Golden Triangle of Freedom*, an idea I stole from our friend, Oz Guinness.

But the idea is that freedom requires virtue, self-government. To be able to govern yourself and not to have a government governing you. To do it yourself, you need virtue. The founders all understood that. Freedom requires virtue, but virtue requires faith. Whenever they saw faith burst out and revival burst out when people got crazy about Jesus and the Bible, domestic abuse went down, crime went down, alcoholism went down.

The people seemed to have the ability to govern themselves in a way that had never happened in history ever, ever. That is what makes America exceptional. It's not we Americans who make America exceptional. It's those ideas to which we have subscribed for nearly 250 years, that are unique in history and beautiful and entrusted to us by God for His purposes in history.

We're living at a time now, where as we know, we've seen just a tremendous decline. Could any of us dream of the madness we're seeing now? You almost couldn't. I think maybe David Wilkerson and Hal Lindsey were the only ones who wrote about, because you'd read that stuff in the '70s and think, "That's crazy." Here we are. But as evil has risen in America, and when I say evil, what are we talking about?

Do I need to mention it? There's 100 places you can look. There's no other word for it but evil. You can't just say, "Well, things are different." When you have an open border and little children being sex trafficked, that is satanically evil. Now, if you say, "Oh, that's political, don't get political." Wow, you think that's political? That's the most moral issue imaginable.

Jesus said, "If you cause one of these little ones to stumble, better that a millstone would be hanged around your neck, and you'd be cast into the heart of the sea." Jesus was not preaching the gospel when He said that. He didn't just preach the gospel. These are moral issues and God calls His people to speak to those issues. As evil has risen among us, we have had many, many churches say, "We don't want to go there."

"We want to pretend it's 1985. Democratic Party is led by Tip O'Neill. Everything's going to be fine." Well, we're not there. If you think you're there, you're lying. If your pastor thinks that we can go back to the way it was before, that's not God's will. God's will is that we are awake to where we are now, and that we respond to where we are now. That His church, which is meant to be led by the Holy Spirit, we're not led just by a book.

Everything we do better be biblical, but we're supposed to be alive to the moment. What is God saying now? What He's saying now is different than what He was saying in 1985 or in 2005. We are seeing evil rise, it's mind-blowing. The transgender stuff is mind-blowing. All of this stuff, we have seen satanic evil. Listen, Target, some of you know this.

Target had stuff designed that was not just rainbow Pride and transgender stuff for kids, but it was openly satanic. I don't know if you saw the pictures. You think these are like fanatical Christians making that up. That can't be true. It's true. What we saw, the LA Dodgers, what they did, I don't even want to talk about it. Unbelievable evil and many pagans, ladies and gentlemen, many pagans see that it's evil.

This is an opportunity for evangelism if the church will stand up. Because many pagans who do not go to church, they look at this and they say, "I don't have any category. What is this?" Tucker Carlson was no evangelical, believe me. I spoke to him a number of years ago. Delightful human being and some kind of Christian, but he in the last couple of years said that this is evil.

Now he's talking about, "Well, we need to pray." All kinds of people who weren't maybe where we are, are coming to where we are because they're seeing evil. When you see evil, if you understand that it's evil, you understand there's only one answer to evil. It's God. There is no other answer. The way I see it, is that these evils have arisen, and this is Romans 8:28. This is my hope is that all things work together for good.

All of these horrors that have arisen, everywhere you look, you say things are not quite right. The journalists were always left, but they were never, something has happened. The medical establishment, I cannot trust the medical establishment. They were basically good guys. Something has happened and it does feel like evil, and I think it's waking people up and I think it's waking many in the church up.

Let me tell you, I believe that all of these horrors are, in fact, waking up Christians in a way that they have never been awakened before. The only question is, will enough of us wake up in time? The hour is very, very late, very late. If you're thinking 10 years down the line, we definitely don't have 10 years. Either we react now, we are in a war.

The way I see it is this is our third existential crisis. The first was the revolution, the second was the Civil War. This is our third existential crisis in which we could cease to exist as a nation, unless the church arise, unless the church be the church. We know that the church did not arise in time in Germany. As a result of that, satanic evil was unleashed in Europe and the world.

Most of us still can't comprehend that the Nazis murdered, systematically murdered, millions and millions of people. That doesn't seem comprehensible to us. But I think it's partially because we in the American church have ceased really to understand this thing called evil. We think, "Well, that's bad. I disagree with that. That's harmful." We're talking about satanic evil.

Jesus didn't die on the cross so that your marriage could be a little better, so that you could be a little bit more successful. He died on the cross to defeat evil and death and hell, and I think we forget sometimes. When you understand what He did, that His sacrifice was against evil, you have to first appreciate that there is that thing called evil. We've been so mightily blessed in this nation, that we have most of us forgotten.

Just as the German church, they thought, "That can't happen in Germany. We're such a Christian nation. Luther is from here. We practically invented Christianity. This is the most Christian nation." Well, that's when they took their eye off the ball. They didn't realize that yes, it could happen there and yes, it could happen here, and it is happening now. But all of these evils are arising, I believe, to wake us up.

Because the Lord knows that unless we would see what could happen, which we are seeing the beginnings of it, we wouldn't wake up. We would just keep going along and think, "We'll be fine. We just have to manage things." We're in the third existential crisis and I really believe it's the 11th hour, and that if we're not all in. Imagine if somebody said to you, "There's going to be a battle tomorrow, and if you lose that battle, it's over."

There's not going to be another battle and another battle. This is it. This is the battle and you've got to use all your bullets tomorrow. Every dime you have, you should spend on ammunition and on the battle tomorrow. Don't keep any back for next week because this is it. The money you have will be taken from you next week if you lose the battle tomorrow. That's where we are now.

I'm here to say whatever money you have, whatever voice you have, whatever freedom you have, whatever connections you have, whatever talents you have,

if you do not use them now for God's purposes, if we lose, they will all be taken from you. Your freedom will be taken from you. Your money will be taken from you. I would spend it now for God's purposes. I'm not going to tell you how.

But I'm just going to tell you, that you have it for now and you won't have it tomorrow. I know it would be very easy to think that I'm speaking hyperbolically. I really wish I were. I really, really wish I were speaking hyperbolically, but it's my very sober estimation that we are precisely where the German church was in 1933 or '34.

Most pastors and Christian leaders are saying, "We'll be okay. We'll be okay. We don't need to get radical." Well, I wish that were true. I don't think that's true. The question is whether the church in America will repeat the nightmare of the church in Germany, or whether we will heed the prophetic voice of Bonhoeffer now? Because I believe that the story of Bonhoeffer is for us today.

Is for the American church today, which is why I wrote the book, *Letter to the American Church*, because obviously God's voice was not heeded by the German church. They missed it. But I really believe that it is for today. I want to say to people, "Are you going to a church that doesn't get this? Are you going to a church that just wants to do church?" I would say for the sake of your soul, get out of that church.

People say, "Well, it's complicated." It's not that complicated. Jesus cursed the fig tree. Jesus cursed the fig tree because it was not bearing fruit. We are living at a time right now where the Lord has appointed His church specifically now to stand against all of these evils that are arising. If the church does not, we have no idea what is coming. I think because my mother grew up in Nazi Germany, which became East Germany under the Soviets.

My father grew up in Greece, which was almost taken over by the Communists after the war. They raised me to know the evil of communism. We in America are so blessed that we don't think it could get that bad. We just don't know how bad it can get. We don't know that there is satanic evil in the world. We've got it pretty good here. Well, we need to understand, and I think the Lord's given us just a taste, to see that, in fact, there is real evil.

And that only His people empowered by His Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus with the authority of Jesus, can stand against it. Nothing else can stand against it so it's up to us. I think if you'd asked George Washington in 1776, "Hey George, how's it going?" What would he have said? It was going very poorly, very, very poorly. In the natural, there's no way we should have been able to survive that first existential crisis.

But I think George Washington would've said, "It's not going well. But if providence before our cause of liberty. If providence before us, if God be with us in this, we may prevail, so we fight on." We don't say like, "Well, it's not going

to work out, so what's the point of doing anything? Or it's going to be fine. What's the point of doing anything?" The Lord calls us to fight.

This is a Christian value most in the church have forgotten. We forgot that fighting for the good, the true, the beautiful, for God's purposes is a godly value. The Lord doesn't call us to fight the way the world fights, but He calls us to fight. Dr. Dobson, as you all know, has been fighting for decades and many, many people were very content to stand back and let him fight. We just want to do church.

We don't want to get political. That's why we are where we are now. That's exactly why we are exactly where we are now. I believe that it is the Lord's will that we not go down the path the German church went down. I believe that, but here's the chilling thing. It is up to you. You are the church. You the church get to choose. We the church get to decide. The Lord has made us in His image and He's given us this terrible liberty to choose.

It's beautiful and terrible. The upside is that if we choose to live self-sacrificially, to give everything we have in this battle now, we get to be a part of the adventure that the Lord created us for. We were born for this. We were born again for this, and to miss it, to sit on the sidelines, to do nothing, that's the horror. To fight, to die fighting, to lose fighting, to win fighting, whatever, it doesn't really matter.

You win when you obey God. To be part of that adventure, is absolutely what the Lord called us to. But most in the American church, I don't think there are many in this room, but most in the American church, don't get it yet. Will they get it? Will you get it? Will you stop going to a church that doesn't get it? Will you understand that?

Every dime that you give to a church like that, it's no different than the German Christians going to the churches that they went to that said, "We're going to look the other way for a few more minutes. We don't want to get involved." That's what led to the death camps. I am cautiously optimistic because the Lord commands us to be hopeful, to be obedient, to rejoice in Him when?

Always, always, including now, especially now, and this is not Pollyanna hope. I think this is real. It looks hopeless, but if we all fight and if the Lord is with us and the Lord needs to do miracles. The Lord needed to do miracles so that we could win the revolution. The Lord did miracles. The Lord did miracles during the Civil War. The Lord has done miracles throughout our history.

Have we forgotten that the Lord can do miracles, that the Lord does miracles in history? I want to say, genuinely speaking, I am genuinely hopeful. I am genuinely hopeful. Thank you very much. God bless you.

Roger Marsh:

That was the conclusion of a two-part presentation given by Eric Metaxas today here on Family Talk. If you missed either part of this broadcast, just visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and you can listen to it again or share the program with a friend or family member. Here at Family Talk, we really enjoy hearing from you.

We encourage you to reach out with your comments, questions, and especially your prayer requests. Now for your convenience, you can always send your feedback to us through the U.S. Mail. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Once again, our ministry mailing address, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute or JDFI for short, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. I'm Roger Marsh, thanking you for listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love. Join us again next time right here.

Announcer:

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.