



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The New Black Robed Regiment – Part 1

Guest(s): Dan Fisher

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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: Roger Marsh here, and from everyone here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, happy Independence Day. That's right. 246 years ago today, the Second Continental Congress formally adopted the Declaration of Independence. This adoption announced to the Western world that the then 13 united colonies officially severed their allegiance to Great Britain and would no longer be subject to the tyranny of King George III. You're listening to Family Talk. And today and tomorrow here on the broadcast, we have a very special patriotic and fascinating conversation to share with you. The discussion features Dr. Dobson and his guest, Pastor Dan Fisher.

The founding document of our nation begins with the famous phrase, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We see here that God is acknowledged right away, and we know from history that Thomas Jefferson and his co-writers were referring to the God of the Bible specifically. The last sentence of the Declaration is not as well-known as the first, but it also appeals to God. It reads, "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

Any reader of this famous document can see that the founding fathers recognized that our rights come from God, not from a ruler or a government, and they were willing to give their lives in defense of these liberties. Dr. Dobson's guest on today's classic Family Talk broadcast is Dan Fisher, a man who is very familiar with the impact that Christianity has had on the impetus and outcome of the American Revolution. Dan Fisher is the co-pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Edmond, Oklahoma, and a former member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives. Dan graduated from Arkansas Tech University and is the author of the book *Bringing Back the Black Robed Regiment*, which will be the central focus of today's and tomorrow's programs.

Bringing Back the Black Robed Regiment is historical nonfiction, and it tells the stories of the 18th century American patriot pastors, then dubbed the Black Robed Regiment. These brave clergymen led their soldiers onto the battlefield to face the British during the Revolutionary War. Inspired by these admirable men of God, Dan Fisher has a passion to rally a new Black Robed Regiment, if you will, who will arm American Christians with the word of God so that we can uphold the Judeo-Christian principles that our nation was founded upon. Dan and his wife, Pam, have been married since 1981 and have two adult children and six grandchildren. Let's go now to part one of Dr. Dobson's classic conversation with pastor and author Dan Fisher. It's a program that we're calling "The New Black Robed Regiment" right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I've invited a pastor to be with us today. He is Dan Fisher, and he's part of a movement called the Black Robed Regiment Movement. You're going to learn more about that if you haven't already heard. And he is an authority on the history of our country. He doesn't call himself that, but I think he is. And how Christian leaders played a major role in the Revolutionary War. In fact, Dan Fisher has written a powerful book that I have here with me. It's on the subject that I think every American should read. It's called, appropriately enough, *Bringing Back the Black Robed Regiment* and how the 18th century church stood for liberty and why it must do so again. Dan is a former member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives. I think, Dan, didn't you serve three terms?

Dan Fisher: Two terms.

Dr. James Dobson: Two terms. And he's a senior pastor of Liberty Church in Yukon, Oklahoma. In fact, Pastor, you helped found that Liberty Church.

Dan Fisher: Yeah. I'd been the pastor of one church for 23 years, and just because of a number of circumstances, we felt it important to begin to create a church model where pastors are not afraid to preach the whole counsel of God. Today, pastors are censoring themselves in the pulpit, as you well know. Because of it, we're suffering. And so we are hoping to maybe build a prototype church where you can preach on all of these issues, not fear the government, not fear criticism. So our hope is to do that. Of course, to preach the gospel and to reach people. That's the ultimate purpose, but to preach the whole truth.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope you get that across because there are many pastors who are afraid that the IRS is going to come shut them down. There's never been a church that the IRS has closed down. Never, and yet-

Dan Fisher: Never.

Dr. James Dobson: Pastors give that as an excuse for not preaching on the issues. I don't think they ought to tell people how to vote. And I understand other pastors not wanting to do that, but there is so much that's hanging in the balance, and people really need to be involved.

Dan Fisher: Oh, yes, sir. In fact, in 2008, the Alliance Defending Freedom started the Pulpit Freedom Initiative, and I was one of the original 33 pastors across the country.

Dr. James Dobson: We talked about it here for several years.

Dan Fisher: Yeah, I know. And it was my honor to do so. And our point was to challenge the Johnson Amendment that we believe is very unconstitutional. It passed in 1954, and we've been a part of that every year since. Pastors are fearful for no reason. The IRS has done nothing. Now, Dr. Dobson, I do believe if we continue to be silent, the IRS will eventually be emboldened enough.

Dr. James Dobson: They will.

Dan Fisher: They will come after us.

Dr. James Dobson: No question about it.

Dan Fisher: Silence is going to create the environment for them to use the power of the law.

Dr. James Dobson: And as I mentioned, they're going to put pressure on parents to raise their kids according to political correctness.

Dan Fisher: That's exactly right. Richard Land used to say, "If we're all willing to go to jail, none of us will have to."

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Dan Fisher: And we're going to have to stand. It's time for pastors. But out of all the people, Dr. Dobson, in the country that ought to be willing to stand, it ought to be pastors who have given their lives to the truth and to liberty and enjoy the privilege of being able to stand before their congregations.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope I don't irritate people with what I'm about to say, but that fear of the IRS is largely a subterfuge. They're really afraid that their parishioners will leave.

Dan Fisher: Oh, I think you're right.

Dr. James Dobson: Or won't give, or will not help them build the next building or whatever. It's really an entrepreneurial thing.

Dan Fisher: I totally agree. In fact, in 2014, George Barna did a very intense and involved study on that very subject. And the top two reasons that pastors said that they're not going to touch these social issues, even though 97% of those pastors agreed the Bible speaks out boldly on all of these things. The top two reasons were they were afraid it would hurt their attendance and, number two, it would hurt the size of their offerings. And those are official findings.

Dr. James Dobson: That's a sad commentary really-

Dan Fisher: Oh, right.

Dr. James Dobson: Because the country, pardon my language, the country's going to Hell.

Dan Fisher: It is.

Dr. James Dobson: It really is. And we're in worse shape now than we have ever been, at least in my lifetime.

Dan Fisher: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm sure the Civil War was a horrible time, and perhaps this is not on that scale, but we've really forgotten God. That's dangerous.

Dan Fisher: Oh, it's incredibly dangerous. Pastors have become CEOs of religious organizations instead of prophets of God. There's a real difference. Jesus talked about the true shepherds and then the hirelings. And I'm not thinking of any one pastor, and I'm not trying to be condemning. I am a pastor myself, have been most of my life. But pastors have now become hirelings. They're just afraid of their job and the prestige and the size of their congregations. And the truth has been swept aside. And now we're, of course, as you said, we're suffering from it.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Are you willing to talk about abortion?

Dan Fisher: Oh, yes. Yeah. I did the Sunday before last.

Dr. James Dobson: With boldness?

Dan Fisher: Oh, yes, sir. I call it murder from the pulpit.

Dr. James Dobson: Does your congregation get up and walk out?

Dan Fisher: No, they do not. In fact, they applaud.

Dr. James Dobson: See, that's what I believe people are waiting for.

Dan Fisher: Oh, I agree.

Dr. James Dobson: And they go to the churches where the pastor will do that.

Dan Fisher: Yes. I had a lady come to me not long ago when I was speaking at an event. She was crying, so she shared her heart with me. She said, "What do I do? My pastor last week got in the pulpit and said that because same-sex marriage has become a political issue, I can't preach on it anymore because I can't preach politics."

Dr. James Dobson: Who took control of that issue? That's in the Scripture.

Dan Fisher: It's a moral issue. In fact, I challenge anyone to show me very many ills in our culture that are not moral and Biblical issues. Not political. They've just simply been co-opted by the politically correct group.

Dr. James Dobson: What will you do if speaking on Jesus becomes politically incorrect?

Dan Fisher: Exactly. I guess these pastors will be quiet. I guess. Dr. Dobson, we're real-

Dr. James Dobson: How far do you take that? I mean...

Dan Fisher: Well, I guess you take it all the way to where you're not willing to be put in any kind of discomfort. You don't want your standard of living to be challenged, and you want a large congregation. We all want our churches to grow. Certainly, the Lord told us to take the word into the whole world, but this idea that our number-one mission is to build a large church is not found in scripture. In fact, Jesus said he would build his church, not the pastor. It's his church. And he said, "I will build my church."

Dr. James Dobson: Jesus began speaking, and a crowd of 5,000 got up and left. And he turned to his disciples and said, "Would you go too?" That's the attitude toward church growth.

Dan Fisher: Exactly right.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, if you preach the gospel, they will come.

Dan Fisher: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: To quote a movie from a long time ago.

Dan Fisher: They will indeed. They are dying to hear it. This dear lady said, "Do you know where there's a Black Regiment pastor in my area? I'll go there." And I said, "You should. You should leave that church. Go to one where they do preach the truth."

Dr. James Dobson: All right. That transitions into what we're here to talk about. What is the Black Robed Movement, and where did it come from?

Dan Fisher: Oh, that's a wonderful question. Dr. Dobson, there were pastors that were pretty much birthed out of the first Great Awakening. Now, many of those pastors were still around when the Declaration was signed, but many of these guys were young in those early days of the Great Awakening. In the 1760s and '70s, they could see the stranglehold that the British had on the colonies beginning to greatly tighten. We hear this business of taxation and taxation without representation.

Dr. James Dobson: That wasn't the issue.

Dan Fisher: That was not the issue. It was a symptom, but there was something deeper. And the deeper issue was tyranny. These pastors began to preach from their pulpits what just government is, what tyranny is, the responsibility of Christians to stand for truth, to defend the innocent, to defend justice, because they saw what was coming. So once the Declaration is signed and the war begins, these very pastors, many of them recruited the men from their churches. We'll probably talk about some of those later, and then from their area where their church was. They recruited those men and led them off as their chaplains and, many of them, their commanders and fought on distant battlefields for those truths. The British so feared these pastors that they called them the Black Regiment.

Dr. James Dobson: So, it was not the pastors who chose that name for themselves?

Dan Fisher: No, it was the British.

Dr. James Dobson: I never knew that.

Dan Fisher: It was the British that called them that, and it was intended to be a term of derision. They were making fun... Because see all of these pastors, it didn't matter whether you were Baptist, Presbyterian, practically all of those pastors every Sunday preached in black robes. That was the style, and they wore these white scarfs called preaching bands, and they would wear these. And so the British knew that it was the pastors that were fanning the flames, so they made them public enemy number one, and they singled them out as the Black Regiment.

Now, they weren't ever an official regiment. There was not a regiment of preachers going around. But they were called that because they were doing a better job of raising troops for the Revolution than the actual recruiters for the Continental Army. These pastors were on the edge.

Dr. James Dobson: What kind of pressure did the British put on them?

Dan Fisher: Well, they put so much pressure that some of the pastors were literally murdered on the battlefield while trying to surrender. We might get to one of those stories in a little while. Other times the pastors were thrown onto prison ships, which were just a terrible, terrible thing. The highest death rate on those prison ships was among the preachers. The British really singled them out. So these pastors knew... In fact, in my book, I quote some of the pastors saying that they knew if they were ever captured by the British, they would be hanged or bayoneted to death or thrown on one of these prison ships. It was a really scary, terrifying thing to do what they were doing.

Dr. James Dobson: Were they being told what to preach on before the Black Robed Regiment came? What kind of pressure was put on them as pastors?

Dan Fisher: Yeah. Well, there was a lot, because remember the King of England was not only the king. He was the head of the Church of England, the Anglican Church. And so his desire would've been to make the Anglican Church the church of the colonies. Now the Anglican Church was the church of Virginia. Peter Muhlenberg, that we'll talk about probably later, one of the quintessential Black Regiment guys, was a Lutheran by heritage, but he had to go to Europe and be ordained as an Anglican preacher to pastor his church in Virginia because Virginia was Anglican. But the king wanted all of the colonies to be Anglican. And the pastors knew that if they didn't speak up, they would eventually be forced into Anglican service, whether it was against their convictions or not. For them, Dr. Dobson, it was not just liberty. It was religious liberty that they were so concerned about.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, does that ring a bell today?

Dan Fisher: Doesn't it? Yeah. It's the issue of our hour.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. So was it, as I understand it, that the pastors were put under this pressure and were uneasy because they were being told what to preach, but it was not until the British really began to do that, began to interfere with their interpretation of Scripture, that the pastors said, "I can't take this. I can't do this"?

Dan Fisher: I would say that the pastors were never actually forced what to preach, but they saw that coming. See, just like today, you and I were just mentioning, we can see a day in the future, if things don't change, where the IRS is going to come down on churches. Well, these Black Regiment guys saw this coming. They knew this was headed their way. They knew it.

Now, you've got to remember, in 1770 America, the colonies, the church was the hub of the culture. Now, not everyone in America was a Christian. Not everyone was a church attender, but the church was the hub of the culture. The pastor was a key individual. Many of those pastors were serving in government already. You take, for instance, Peter Muhlenberg that I mentioned, the Lutheran in Woodstock, Virginia, he was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses. He served there with George Washington and Patrick Henry. See, these pastors were already engaged. So they knew that if they didn't take care of business, they were going to have things force fed.

Dr. James Dobson: So finally, they got to the point where they stripped off those black robes and they had... Some of them had uniforms, military uniforms underneath.

Dan Fisher: Yes, sir. In fact, Peter Muhlenberg, as an example, his nephew, Henry Augustus, it's his great-nephew, in 1849 writes about the event that happened that I just call the Muhlenberg Robe Movement.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, you've mentioned him three or four times. Tell us why he's significant.

Dan Fisher: Okay. Well, Peter Muhlenberg came from an illustrious Lutheran family. His father Henry had helped found the Lutheran church in Pennsylvania. Peter Muhlenberg goes down into Virginia. Peter had had a little bit of a rough past as a young man. He had a very fiery temper. He'd gone to Europe, been involved in fighting with the dragoons and all this, but he couldn't escape the call to ministry. He goes back, settles in Virginia, wants to pastor a church. Well, you've got to be Anglican. He's Lutheran. So he goes to Europe, is ordained as an Anglican, goes back, pastors a little church in a frontier town called Woodstock, Virginia. I was there just last week.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Dan Fisher: Yeah. And he pastors this little church. It would've been an Episcopal church, which is the American version of the Anglican Church. But in his heart, he was Lutheran. Okay? So this is Peter Muhlenberg. He's also a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses till King George shut it down because he saw sedition coming, as he would've called it. Well, George Washington and Patrick Henry had a hand in recommending Peter Muhlenberg, the preacher, to be commissioned as a colonel to raise the 8th Virginia Regiment, which would be a... They were going to be a cavalry unit.

So, on January the 21st, 1776, Peter Muhlenberg preaches his final sermon in his church at Woodstock. He had announced it. The people were there. And as his nephew tells the story, when he's finished with a relatively short sermon out of Ecclesiastes 3, there's a time for all things, Muhlenberg faces his congregation after stepping off to the side, removing his robe. He's wearing a colonel's uniform. And he says, "Ladies and gentlemen, there's a time to preach. There's a time to pray, but there's also a time to fight."

Dr. James Dobson: Time to fight.

Dan Fisher: "And that time has now come." And he recruits the men of his church and of the Woodstock area to join the 3rd Virginia. He leads them all-

Dr. James Dobson: Was that the beginning of the Black Robed Regiment, so to speak?

Dan Fisher: I would say that that was close, but actually the Black Regiment was involved at Lexington. We can talk about Jonas Clarke. Jonas Clarke was the pastor of the church in Lexington, Massachusetts, where the first shots of the Revolution are fired in his churchyard, by the way. A deacon named John Parker... They called him Captain Parker because he was a veteran of the French and Indian War, had

been training the men of his church and of Lexington how to fight together as soldiers all over New England. They were calling themselves the Minutemen. Now, who forgot to tell me that the famous Lexington Minutemen were trained and led by a pastor and a deacon?

Dan Fisher: And when Paul Revere makes his famous ride the night of April the 18th, 1775, he rides to Pastor Clarke's house. Samuel Adams and John Hancock are spending the night with Pastor Jonas Clarke. John Hancock's grandfather had pastored that church years before. And the very next day, of course, he and Captain Parker lead the Lexington Minutemen out and they face the British. So you can go all the way back to the very beginning of our War of Independence, and the preachers are there.

Dr. James Dobson: And the church was there.

Dan Fisher: The church was there. That afternoon at Concord, Pastor William Emerson was up on the hill overlooking the Old North Bridge. He's the grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson. He's standing there with the colonial militia telling them to stand their ground. If they're going to die, let's die here. And of course, then they go down to the Old North Bridge and fight the British at the Battle of Concord the afternoon after Jonas Clarke's men from his church had fought the same British at Lexington. The Black Regiment was there from the outset.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you know that my grandfather five times removed, I don't even know how many times back, was Dr. Joseph Dobson. He emigrated from Britain, from London, and he was a physician in the Revolutionary War.

Dan Fisher: Oh!

Dr. James Dobson: And his son was captain of the horse guard in the Revolutionary War. And he and 73 of his men were killed.

Dan Fisher: Oh.

Dr. James Dobson: There's a monument there. They're all buried in a common grave. They're in North Carolina, and I'd like to go see it sometime.

Dan Fisher: Oh, you need to do that. Oh, you need to. So see, you have an illustrious history of liberty and family that stood for liberty.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right. I do.

Dan Fisher: Yeah. Well, you see, Muhlenberg, if we go back to him, he serves all through the war, is promoted to major general, serves with George Washington, is at Valley Forge the winter of '77-78. His statue today is in Statuary Hall in our nation's Capital. And Peter Muhlenberg is in the painting of John Trumbull of the surrender ceremony of Cornwallis that hangs in the Rotunda of our Capitol.

Dr. James Dobson: No kidding?

Dan Fisher: And that's Peter Muhlenberg. He was a Lutheran preacher who had to become Anglican because he was in Virginia.

Dr. James Dobson: And you can't listen to David Barton for very long without knowing that Christians and Christian leaders were all over the founding-

Dan Fisher: Oh, that's right.

Dr. James Dobson: ... of our country and the creation of the Constitution.

Dan Fisher: Oh, sure. Dr. Dobson, you gave me greater accolades than I deserve. But in my research on the Black Regiment, I am convinced that had the church not done what it did, there would have never been a revolution, and I guarantee you, there would've never been the America that we know today. It would've never existed. It was the church. Many of those founders that you mentioned recall back, and they actually tell us that. They tell us that it was the church that was the firebrand.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, this brings us to the point of this entire program, and I'd like to talk to you again next time because there's so many stories. The issues that are being discussed here are life and death and righteousness versus unrighteousness.

Dan Fisher: Oh, that's exactly right. You see, with our founders, this idea of compartmentalizing our lives into the sacred and the secular was foreign to them. They mixed the two because, as believers, they saw the Bible influencing every area of life.

Dr. James Dobson: Our time is gone. Let's do it again tomorrow.

Dan Fisher: Let's do it. I'd be happy to.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Roger Marsh: Well, what inspiring accounts of some of the brave clergy who chose to give up their steady vocations to join in the fight for liberty during the American Revolution. I'm Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. You just heard the first half of Dr. Dobson's classic conversation with author, speaker, and pastor, Dan Fisher. The two men talked about Dan's book, *Bringing Back the Black Robed Regiment*, and some of the 18th century pastors whose stories made it into that book.

Make sure you join us again tomorrow to hear the rest of their conversation. Dan Fisher will tell several more fascinating accounts of the men of God who were critical players in our nation's founding. You will not want to miss it. Now, if you did miss any of today's program, be sure to listen again by visiting

drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. While you're there, you can learn more about Dan Fisher, his ministry, Bringing Back the Black Robed Regiment, and his book featuring that same title. Again, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, or feel free to give us a call at (877) 732-6825.

Well, we began today's program by reading a couple of sections from the Declaration of Independence. I'd like to conclude our broadcast today by quoting American historian, B.F. Morris. In 1864, Morris wrote, "The ministers of the Revolution were, like their Puritan predecessors, bold and fearless in the cause of their country. No class of men contributed more to carry forward the Revolution and to achieve our independence than did the ministers. By their prayers, patriotic sermons, and services, they rendered the highest assistance to the civil government, the army, and the country."

It's important for us as Christians to remember why these pastors fought so valiantly for American independence. It was because they knew that losing their freedom to the British would eventually mean losing their ability to preach the gospel openly without censorship and the restriction of a state-mandated denomination. And they simply were not about to sacrifice their calling and the truth of Jesus Christ without putting up a fight. Thanks for listening to Family Talk here on this 4th of July. Be sure to join us again tomorrow to hear the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dan Fisher. And from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, I'm Roger Marsh wishing you and yours a happy Independence Day.

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

Roger Marsh: Hey, everyone, Roger Marsh here. When you think about your family and where they will be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? Are you hopeful? What kind of legacy are you leaving for your children and their children? Here at Family Talk, we're committed to helping you understand the legacy that you're leaving for your family. Join us today at drjamesdobson.org for helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. James Dobson himself. And remember, your legacy matters.