



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Letter to the American Church: Faith Without Works is Dead – 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: Welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, the world around us seems to be crumbling literally right before our eyes. It's sobering to think about it all, the division in this country, absent fathers at an all-time high, the wicked sin of abortion. Makes you think, what role does the Church play in the face of today's broken culture? Well, we'll hear more about that with some potential answers to our current situation, in part two of today's conversation with our special guest, Eric Metaxas. He recently sat down with our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton, at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention to discuss his latest best-selling book called *Letter to the American Church*. The conversation focused on the current trajectory of the Body of Christ in America, Eric Metaxas will make some interesting historical comparisons and ask some hard questions we need to consider for such a time as this as you listen to today's interview.

Now, you may know Eric Metaxas from his other works, which include *Bonhoeffer, Is Atheism Dead?*, and *Seven Men*. Eric is an author, talk show host and conservative Christian thought leader. His articles have been published in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. You've seen him as a featured cultural commentator on *Fox News* and *CNN*. Eric Metaxas is also the host of *The Eric Metaxas Show*. You may have heard it on your favorite Salem Talk radio station, or digital platform, or have seen it on the Salem News Channel. Eric is married to Susanne and along with their daughter, they make their home in New York City. And now let's rejoin Eric Metaxas and co-host Dr. Tim Clinton right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Eric, welcome back. What a delightful conversation yesterday. Sobering. I used that word yesterday, shocking because it's hard to believe that we are where we're at in the church. We ended the broadcast by saying this, there's a stirring going on. Eric, do you see a stirring going on out there-

Eric Metaxas: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: ... Among the people.

Eric Metaxas:

Oh no, this is the point, is that if you think about it, Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good, for those that love the Lord and are called according to his purpose." This is a classic example because things have gotten so bad. The Lord is using that, is allowing things really to go to Hell in every direction, to wake up those in the church who might be awakened. And the fact of the matter is, if things had not gotten as bad as they are now, and they will get worse if we don't wake up, much worse. But if they hadn't gotten this bad, this insane, many people would still be drifting along, sleeping. They're just thinking "Everything's fine. I go to church on Sunday morning, I'm part of some Bible study, everything's cool." And they've turned a blind eye to unbelievable evil happening because it's not happening to them.

But God calls us to care about other people, to care about strangers, and whether you care about Uyghur Muslims being murdered for their organs in China, whether you care about, you name it, you care about people in middle America who are dying from fentanyl overdoses, who have no hope. We at the church are supposed to care about these people called to, we say to preach the gospel, we're to preach the whole council of scripture, the morality of God, the truth of God, to give people hope.

If you don't believe that there's a God who loves you and as a purpose for your life, why wouldn't you kill yourself? Slowly or quickly, why would you care? Why would you do anything? It's our job to give people hope. So I believe by allowing things to get as insanely bad as they have gotten where you don't know who to trust, the mainstream media journalism is a corpse floating in a pond someplace.

There was a time in America when you could rely on journalists basically to tell you the truth, give you the facts, that's dead. Do we trust the medical profession? Do we trust the pharmaceutical industry? Do we trust corporate America? Do we trust our own government? Do we trust our elections? Things had to get that bad, as they are now for people to wake up and say, "You know what? We got to do something. We need to go back to basics." That's what God is calling the church to do, and often you see it through Scripture, you see through history allows things to get so bad to wake up the remnant to say, "I will stand. I've been guilty. My board of elders told me not to get involved in that stuff and I listened to them. I want to repent of that. I want to be a voice for God in the culture because they're people depending on us, people who are not in the church, depending on the church to speak out on every single one of these issues."

So yes, I actually believe God called me to write this book, because I believe God's plan is for us not to go down that path. But I'll be clear, we are going down that path right now. In other words, unless more people in the church wake up, it is horrifying where we are and where we're going to go. So I'm hopeful, but it's kind of like saying to George Washington at the Battle of Brooklyn in 1776, like, "Hey, do you think you're going to win in the natural?" No. But with God's help. Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that. Eric, as I made my way through your book, I kept thinking about a confused church. We have a confused Church. In a lot of ways, I guess the radical left, and maybe some even in the Church have gained strength in persuading a lot of people in the American church that to fight the cultural issues would be to abandon the gospel, that we're somehow bringing reproach on the gospel. We're turning people away from Christ.

Eric Metaxas: That is the devil's lie. We got to understand, we have been so blessed that we are fat, and lazy, and comfortable. We have no idea how evil, evil is the lies that are out there. We're not on guard against it. We've had so much freedom that we don't understand. People have bled, and died, and suffered for freedom. People have bled and died for the gospel over the centuries. We're so comfortable that we are easily fooled. So when people give us this idea like, "Hey, are you a member of the Kingdom of Heaven or are you an American Christian nationalist?" The proper response is to laugh in their face because that's exactly like when they said to Jesus, "Hey, Jesus, should we pay taxes? What do you say there, Jesus?" The question was designed to trip Him up. The question was designed to find a way to accuse Him because there was no right answer to the question.

And of course, Jesus being God, comes up with an answer that blows their minds and makes them walking away like, I guess we didn't trip Him up, but these questions are all diabolical questions. When somebody says, "Aren't you interested in the kingdom of God?" I mean, if I'm interested in the kingdom of God, I'm going to be a patriotic American. Why? Because I'm supposed to be able to chew gum and walk at the same time. So the devil's question is like, "You need to choose. You going to walk or you going to chew gum, which is it?" The devil's question. That's a question you don't answer, you walk away. To answer that question is to cast pearls before swine.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that's where you were saying the German church got lost in the face of evil. They got confused on what they should do in that moment. Likewise, the American Church is in the same state, or I'll just use big C, you and I, meaning, everyday believers, the church of Jesus Christ. That's the confusion that's coming in. So that chapter on the church and the Jewish question then made sense. Because is that a responsibility of the church or not? And if the quote, "Responsibility of the church" is to care for the disenfranchised, then we have to step up and into this, and then what part of life does the church not influence, right?

Eric Metaxas: I mean, look, let's go back to Wilberforce. I mean, I always talk about my book on Bonhoeffer, but I wrote a biography of William Wilberforce. This is a man who gets saved at age 26. He's a famous politician in England. He goes to John Newton who wrote Amazing Grace, the former slave trader. He says, "What should I do? I've just had this experience now with God. I guess I have to leave politics, right?" Newton says, "No, God has put you in politics to use your talents, your abilities, your connections in the world of politics for God's purposes, and there are millions of African slaves whose lives you have the

power to improve, to change as a politician. Now, your politics is informed by your faith in Jesus, but for you to abdicate the world of politics is to say, who cares about the African slave trade? Who cares about those families being torn apart and suffering the tortures of the damned in the middle passage? Who cares? I just care about souls."

That is the devil's choice to pretend that you can only care about salvation, or you can only care about evangelism. That's why there's a chapter in the book, Letter to the American Church called "The Idol of Evangelism." I'm just going to do evangelism. I'm not going to do all that other stuff God calls me to do, I'm just going to focus on this, but Wilberforce is the classic example. He didn't just say, "Politics is not off the table." He said, "God has called me to politics for his purposes." Same thing happened with abolition in America. Same thing happened in the civil rights era. The same thing happened in overturning Roe v. Wade, there's a time when God calls us into politics. He never calls us away from himself, or from preaching His gospel, but the idea that we have to make this choice, that's the devil's idea. That's not God's idea

Dr. Tim Clinton: In a lot of ways, Eric, the current cultural battle over abuse and violence, the battle over those who have been horrifically disenfranchised, I think of sexual trafficking, and more. They in the midst of all this are warring to "give a voice back" to those in that broken state. In the same vein, we're talking about the same thing here, at a macro level, that those are the issues that we're fighting for because we're in the midst of a hellish, if you will, evil onslaught coming against us that people are turning a blind eye to and believing that if you participate in this culture war, then you drifting into more of "a nationalism" If you will.

Eric Metaxas: That's complete nonsense. Whenever I hear somebody worried about nationalism or what, I mean, it's like being in Germany in 1933. The Nazis have totally taken over and saying like, "Well, listen, Hitler's not perfect, but you better watch those Bolsheviks. The communists, you better watch them. You're watching them?" And you're like, "That's a joke like 10 years ago maybe. But right now, the Nazis have crushed the Bolsheviks. The Nazis have taken over." So for you to falsely say, "Better watch this over here." Not if you have any discernment, not if the Holy Spirit is speaking through you, but that's basically where we are today. In other words, we have globalist, atheist forces, Marxist forces are trying to take over the whole world. China's at the center of it, but you've got this, whether it's Davos or World Economic Forum, they are wanting to crush any biblical influence. They want to erase national boundaries, and they're doing it. They're erasing every distinction between the sexes.

In other words, it's a level of total madness. And then you have these nominally Christian voices, whether it's Russell Moore who now heads up Christianity Today, which has become a horrible publication, what a tragedy. Or David French, who are actually saying, "Better watch Christian nationalism. And you think, what planet do you live on? That you're bringing that up?" It's like somebody comes in with a gaping wound and you say, "You know what? Your

hair's out of place, dude, look in the mirror, comb your hair." Are you kidding me? That's what these voices are saying, and we need to reject them. We need to laugh and walk away.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here. Our special guest today, Eric Metaxas, cultural commentator, voice that God has raised up for such a time as this, new book, *Letter to the American Church*, a strong letter. Some said, Eric, that if the apostle Paul was alive, we'd be getting a letter. That we are living in a day and time where words need to be spoken. We need to think and press through these issues.

Eric, we were just talking about the whole issue of Christian nationalism, and again, a branding, if you will, to quote, "muzzle," I think in a lot of ways this voice that's crying out saying, "Listen, we cannot turn a blind eye to everything that's going on around us. We can't sing louder as a church. We've got to address these issues and we've got to address them now. We need to step up and into this moment."

Eric, in the midst of this comes the issue, I think of religious liberty because the church has been at the forefront of religious liberty. That's what this is all about, and those freedoms, and I think if you look at people in the church, they realize they're being taken away. This is the battleground. It's basically the right on which other rights exist.

Eric Metaxas: Well, I was going to say that, look, Christians have gotten religious liberty wrong for a long time. Martin Luther, I wrote a book about him. He didn't understand religious liberty the way we do, this is an evolving thing, and to have religious liberty to understand it's an amazing thing because it extends way beyond the church. Religious liberty is not for Christians. Religious liberty is for everybody. If I want to be an atheist in America, I'm free to be an atheist. If I want to be a Buddhist, or I want to do whatever I want, we have religious liberty in America. It is a beautiful, amazing idea, and Christians shouldn't get caught up in its religious liberty. For me, it's for everybody. That's what makes it so amazing. So when voices come in to muzzle the voice of the Church, ultimately what they're doing, they want to muzzle everybody's voice, ultimately. So let's put it this way. When somebody says like, "Ah, you're a Christian nationalist." It's no different than they have no argument, so they've got to figure out how to call you a racist, a transph... Now they're going to throw names at you because they have no argument, and it often works because there are many people-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Who are scared to death.

Eric Metaxas: ... Who are cowardly, and who are they going to say, "Oh, you call me this. Okay, I'll shut up. Oh, you call me that. I'll keep my mouth shut. I'm sorry. What do I need to do? Where do I need to sign on the line? What flag do I need to put in front of my store so you'll leave me alone?" That kind of intimidation works. The Nazis used it. Basically, if you didn't say, "Heil Hitler" loud enough, or you didn't

go along with them, they would say, "What's the matter with you? Aren't you a patriotic German?" That's where we're talking about nationalism. Today, nationalism isn't the issue.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You referenced the late Chuck Colson whom Dr. Dobson really loved, and I think they were quoting Abraham-

Eric Metaxas: Well, the Abraham Kuyper was this famous Dutch theologian who said, I say... Chuck said this in almost every one of his speeches. He said, "There's not one square inch of all creation over which Jesus Christ, who is sovereign, does not say, "mine."

In other words, when the church just says, "Oh, we're just going to stick to our little theological stuff." No, Jesus is interested in taking our theological stuff into every sphere in the world, into everything, into politics and the culture, into media, into medicine. And I don't know if you meant also to bring up Alexis Tocqueville, but he's somebody that Chuck Wilson would often talk about.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes. Yeah. He canvassed the country. He realized that American exceptionalism really he found was in our churches.

Eric Metaxas: This is what's so amazing, and there's no getting around it, Tim. The idea of America, according to the founders, depended on vibrant communities of Christian faith. Now, you cannot legislate that because you need religious liberty. So they couldn't say, "Everybody has to go to church, everybody has to tithe." They said, "No, no, no, no, no. Here's the genius of it, is it's free. If you do it on your own, it works. We can't legislate it. On the other hand, if we don't have churches being vibrant influences in the culture and the community, we will not have freedom because the freedom we have in America comes out of the Scripture."

It's an amazing thing. Tocqueville comes here as a Frenchman, and he's thinking, in my country, the government is basically allied with the church in an official way. So when we today, talk about big government in that day and age, they're talking about, yeah, we got big government, and they're allied with the church, and they're the powers that don't care about the people. In America, they have freedom. So the government is divorced officially from the churches at the heart... I write about this in my book, *If You Can Keep It*, and Benjamin Franklin and all the founders understood that the American experiment, it's a unique idea in the history of the world that people are going to govern themselves, but it depends on them having religious liberty, and that's what makes it a conundrum. In other words we have to keep ourselves free, we have to teach our children about what is liberty, what is religious liberty? And once that begins to go away, everybody loses liberty, and you have an authoritarian government, and of course, that's-

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's what we're seeing in Canada. Look what we're seeing in Australia and so much more. It's scary.

Eric Metaxas: There you go.

Dr. Tim Clinton: No, it's just terrifying. Eric, the essence of the book, I think bow ties this way. What then can I do? "I'm listening in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Ansonville, Pennsylvania. I don't really have a voice, but I hear you and I care."

Eric Metaxas: People don't think they have a voice. I'll tell you right now, if you are tithing to a church, that's a lot of voice you got right there. And if you're going to a church that is turning a blind eye to this, you need to get out of that church yesterday. You want to do something bold and courageous? Leave the church that is complicit with evil, that is pretending, that's singing this happy song. Oh, we preach the gospel, we're preaching of the gospel, but they are not commenting on the evil that is around us. God calls His people not just to comment on the evil, but to do something about it. That's what the church is supposed to do. If what you get in that service does not enter every part of your life, pass that service on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, all week long. You're trying to fool God. You're playing church.

Bonhoeffer, when he came to America, he basically saw this in the White Protestant churches. The mainline Protestant churches were already dead in 1930, okay? In 1930, they'd already gone on this modernist progressive journey. He sees this, right? They're going to church, they're playing church. They get dressed up, they go there, and it has no effect on the rest of their lives. It was in the Black church in New York that he saw the faith lived out holistically. Why? Because these were people who had suffered. These were people, some of whom in 1930, they had grown up during slavery. They understood there's no division between faith and politics. I want to take my faith and I want it to affect the laws. They would speak out against the lynching going on in the South. They didn't say, "That's not my problem. I just want to have a nice church service." They actually said, "No. We are called to speak up for our brethren who are suffering in the South, even though we're here in New York." That's God's church.

And when Bonhoeffer saw that, he said, "We need this in Germany." And he begins to speak about this in the German church and say, "Hey, we've got to speak out for the Jews. Are you a Jew?" "No." Well, doesn't matter. God loves them. God calls you to speak up for them. So this is an issue that comes up over and over again. Will the Church be the Church? And we in America have had it so good that we have drifted, and drifted, and drifted, that we think I'm just going to have this Sunday morning experience. God and the devil really don't care what you claim to believe if you're not living it out. They both know you don't actually believe it.

So if you're saved by faith, you're counted as not having faith, that should scare people. And so I really believe that God called me to write this book, to wake up

those who could be awakened and to say, "By the way, God calls us to an amazing adventure. Why would we even get to fight in this battle? It's why we were put on this planet. This is not something for other people to do."

So we are at a unique moment in history right now. It ought to excite us that God allows us to be alive at this moment because we often say people read the *Bonhoeffer* book, "Oh, if I was alive, then I'd be right there with Bonhoeffer." "Oh, if I was alive during the slavery debates, man, I would've been a loud voice against slavery." "If I was with Wilberforce, I would've been speaking about the slave trade."

Well, now's your chance, because we've got a raft of issues, many of them political, some of them cultural. Will you dare to be a voice? Because by the way, people are looking to us for leadership. They're looking around and saying, "Things are falling apart. Is there truth? Is there such a thing as truth? Is there any anybody I can trust?" So when you say, people say, "I don't have a voice." I mean at the least you could, you could give the book to your pastor and say, "I need you to read this, and I need you to tell me where you come out on this." And if they do not repent and change, get out of that church. Do not support a church that is complicit in allowing evil to take over, because God holds us accountable.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Before you go, Dr. Dobson thinks the world of you. He wishes he could have been here to do this interview himself. He said, "Tim, do a good job with Eric, get after him." But I'd love for you to send us out with a dose of encouragement to Dr. Dobson, especially in this moment.

Eric Metaxas: Oh, well, listen. First of all, I would say that those of us saying things like what I'm saying right now, we would not be here if we're not for Dr. Dobson. The Lord has used him and a handful of others, Chuck Colson, so powerfully that these ideas are alive. And so I don't believe the Lord would've called me to write this book and called me to speak everywhere about this if there wasn't hope. There are people who have gotten this, heroes all over the country. You're not going to see them in the news. You're going to be gaslighted in the thinking that you're the only freak who holds the views that you hold. That's not true. There are millions of people who understand this, and who are already doing something about it, but the question is, can we reach those who are still thinking, I don't need to choose. I just need to hang here in the middle and let this stuff pass? Those are the ones we need to reach. There's a lot of good folks that when they hear this, they'll go, "You know what? Yeah, I get it. I didn't get it, and I want to get it, and I want to be part of the solution." I am genuinely hopeful. Otherwise, I couldn't bear to be talking about this stuff.

Dr. Tim Clinton: God raised up a generation willing to stand strong, and we join in prayer with Dr. Dobson, that the church would awaken and take her rightful place for such a time as this.

What a delight again, to have Eric Metaxas cultural commentator, author of the new book, *Letter to the American Church*. If you don't have it, you need to get it. Read it. Make sure your pastor gets a copy of this book.

As always, on behalf Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here, Eric, we pray God would be with you, that he would encourage you, they would strengthen your voice in this hour. Thank you for joining us.

Eric Metaxas: My privilege. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: God will hold us accountable for what we do and don't do here on Earth. Will you dare to be a voice for the Lord? That was the conclusion of a powerful thought-provoking conversation featuring Eric Metaxas and our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton, here on Family Talk. Just a brief reminder, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is a completely listener supported ministry. Would you consider partnering with us financially even today? And right now, I am pleased to share with you that for the rest of the month of June, we have been blessed by some special friends of the ministry with a matching grant of \$300,000. Now, if you'd like to make a donation online, it's absolutely secure, when you go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org.

If you prefer, contact a member of our customer care team by phone when you call 877-732-6825. And from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, please know how much we appreciate your prayers and ongoing financial support. I'm Roger Marsh, thanks for tuning in today and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

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