



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Letter to the American Church: Faith Without Works is Dead – Part 1

Guest(s): Eric Metaxas

Air Date: June 19, 2023

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Welcome friends to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Hope you enjoyed Father's Day yesterday. Perhaps you spent some quality time with your dad or that man who plays an important role in your life, or maybe you gave him a call and told him that you appreciate the time he spent with you when you were a kid. Now, as Christians, it's important for all of us to care for one another as the body of Christ, of course, but can you imagine a world in which each of us actually lived a bold life exactly as God has called us to do? Sadly, we know what can happen when people don't do that. It's time for faith to be put into action, though to make sure that that becomes the exception rather than the rule. Our guest today here on Family Talk is author talk show, host and conservative Christian thought leader, Eric Metaxas.

Recently, Eric sat down with our co-host Dr. Tim Clinton to discuss his latest book called *Letter to the American Church*. The precept of the book is that we in America are dangerously close to where the German church was in the 1930s, turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to oppression and wicked sin. This two-part conversation was recorded at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Florida last month. By the way, some of Eric Metaxas's other books include *Bonhoeffer, Is Atheism Dead?* and *Seven Men*. Eric has had articles published in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. He's been a featured cultural commentator on *CNN* and *Fox News*. He's also host of the Eric Metaxas Show. You can listen on your favorite Salem talk station or digital platform or watch it on the Salem News Channel. Eric Metaxas resides in New York City with his wife Susanne and their daughter. Let's join Dr. Tim Clinton and Eric Metaxas right now. Right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome back to Family Talk, Eric. What a delight to have you, Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, send their regards. They have such an affection for you.

Eric Metaxas: Well, let me tell you something, if they have an affection for me, I get speechless. He's a hero to me, Dr. Dobson. Like 40 years ago, he understood that the church has to be a voice in the culture that God demands of us, that we

take our little faith, we claim to have this faith and that we bring it into every sphere in culture, including politics, including all the moral issues. He was one of the great leaders in that, and obviously we've slid very, very far and it's why I wrote this book. I want his audience to know how much I love him and what a huge debt I owe to him, so thank you Tim.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Eric, back a few years ago. I remember being at Focus on the Family. Dr. Dobson was hosting an event. I'll never forget what he said to them passionately. He looked every one of them in the eye and he said, "We've got to pray that the church would awaken and take a rightful place. Until then, parachurch organizations have to stand in the gap." He said, "But the power's not there, the power's in the church and with tears, the church needs to awaken." Eric, we're going to talk about that in a lot more. I know this that Erwin Lutzer said, your book, *Letter to the American Church* is a bucket of cold water thrown in the face of a sleeping church. I couldn't agree more.

As we get started, Eric, I know you're busy while you're here at the NRB, the National Religious Broadcasting Event, and we appreciate your time. But I wanted to open up by, I saw that you're going to be speaking part of a panel called Living in the Dobbs Era, Life After Roe. Eric, for the listeners at home, any nuggets of wisdom, any thoughts about what you're going to share, what you plan on really trying to drive home for the audience?

Eric Metaxas:

Well, I believe I'm facilitating that panel. I'm the moderator, so as much as I like to talk, I'm going to try hard to shut up and let the others talk, but I can't shut up on the issue of Dobbs and the issue of the unborn because it is central to what I talk about in *Letter to the American Church*. There are many Christian leaders in America today who have preposterously suggested that somehow we could divorce faith in politics. It's like, have you heard of the slavery issue in America? There were many pastors back then who said, "Oh, we don't want to get involved in politics, so let the African slaves go to hell. Who cares about them? We're going to preach our gospel." I put it pointedly because that's how ridiculous it is. There are issues that are moral issues that people like William Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln and others had to use politics to bring God's vision of human beings to bear in the culture, in the nation, in our laws.

But there have always been voices that effectively say, "We don't care about those who are suffering. We just want to preach the gospel." And I always ask, "What dead useless gospel, what devil's gospel are you preaching that you could avoid speaking about the suffering of human beings at the hands of other human beings? When you have something you can do about it, God's given you the ability through self-government, through living in a free country to exert your influence, which is to exert God's influence politically." And so it blows my mind that when we're talking about *Dobbs*, we're talking about the unborn that ended up being political, just like civil rights was political. The civil rights stuff comes out of the churches, but it was enacted into laws because that's our job, we're self-governing. We're not under the Roman Empire. And so if you care

about other people, which God commands us to do, you are often obliged to get political, but you're not making an idol of politics.

We don't make an idol of anything but this false idea, this terrible lie that is crept into the church. This is over the centuries and over the decades that we need to avoid politics has led us to where we are now, where many Christians literally don't vote or don't care, or they have this fatalistic attitude, Tim, let it all burn, let it all... This is their kind of bad theology like, "Let it all burn, that's the world. I'm focused on the Kingdom." Well, if you're focused on the Kingdom, you're going to care about other people. You're going to care about, can you abolish slavery or do you want to be part of that? Can you abolish a system that murders the unborn that makes it easy to do that? All these things become political. And so when believers out of pure fear, whether it's fear of man or whatever it is, when they say, "Well, I've got this other way, I'm going to be unpolitical."

There's a horrifying book sort of saying, "No, stay out of politics. Stay out of politics." And what they're really saying is, don't do politics that disagrees with my politics. That's what they're really saying, so it's disingenuous in a sense because they are themselves being political because if you sit on the sidelines on any of these issues, you're going to allow evil forces to triumph in politics. You can see why I'm going to have a hard time shutting up at the panel tomorrow.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Eric, let's step back for a moment. Last couple of years have been a tough ride for everybody. In a lot of ways it's just very sobering what we've been through. You know I land on the mental health side and I just think about, it was only intuitive that we're going to see an uptick in mental health issues and more. But on top of that, this cascading, if you will, off the cliff on social issues and more, it's just been unreal. In a lot of ways, it's not just sobering, it's shocking. No one ever thought, we would see what we're seeing before our own eyes, and in a lot of ways this is a battle for the soul of the nation.

Eric Metaxas: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It reminded me of Lamentations where Jeremiah basically said to Jerusalem that she did not consider her future, and thus her fall was astounding. Some would say America's there and the American church is in the midst of a defining moment. In your book, you parallel haunting similarity between the German church. I go back to your work on *Bonhoeffer* and more and the American church where we're at today. Take us down that road. How do you see it? What do you see?

Eric Metaxas: If anybody wants to know exactly what's happening today, they can read my *Bonhoeffer* book. That book, when you read it, you won't have to try. It will pop up in your mind as you're reading what happened to Germany in the 30s. It will become very clear like, "Whoa, this is creepily similar to what we're going through now." It's horrifying when you make the parallels.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Listen, as I went through the pages of the book, I was just like shocked.

Eric Metaxas: Well, it's bizarre. And I kind of sense that. I wrote the book in 2008, and while I was writing the book not expecting to make these parallels, they kept popping up. I thought, "This is creepy. Could this be on our horizon?" As it has come, I feel like God has prophetically prepared me. He called me to write the *Bonhoeffer* book literally for such a time as this for the church to say, "You see this? This is you now." Now I want to make clear to people when you bring up the Nazis and stuff, because of our relative historical ignorance, we don't understand, we think like, "Oh, we put the Nazis in a special bucket over there." Wrong. They rose slowly. They accrued power slowly cleverly nobody in 1931, '32, '33 had a clue where this is going. We immediately go to the death camps.

Nobody was talking about the final solution, systematic murdering of millions and millions and millions of Jews and others in 1931, '32, '34. There's just no way that anybody really could be held accountable for knowing that unless you had a deep sense from God of how these things play out. And Bonhoeffer was one of them. He could smell where the Nazis are spiritually and where they're going to take us if they get power, so he was speaking loudly and clearly and prophetically to the German church of the day saying, "You must stand now. You got to stand and fight against this right now while you can." And of course many in the German church said, "No, no, no. You're a hothead. You want to draw us into politics and we don't want to be about politics. We want to be above the fray. We just want to preach the gospel."

And while they hid behind Romans 13, kind of like a fig leaf, it's not fooling God, it's not fooling the devil, but they hid behind this religious fig leaf and they basically felt, "You know what? If we don't take sides, we're just going to step back and we'll just let this pass. The pendulum swings both ways and we'll be fine when it's all over. We'll be standing because we didn't get sucked into the battle." And Bonhoeffer was trying to explain to them correctly, "This is the battle to which the Lord has called you. If you do not fight in this battle, you are marked down as guilty as helping evil to thrive and to come into power." And that's exactly what happened. But the shock, Tim, is that that is exactly what's been happening in the United States of America because we have to remember, it was good people in Germany that screwed this up. They were not evil goosestepping, SS figures. These were pastors who simply got it wrong, who let their fear of man, their fear of losing their salaries, they let that govern them.

They let that silence them just long and enough for evil to take over. And so there are many good people in America today who are getting this wrong, who are unwittingly allowing evil to triumph, but they don't realize that. I wrote the book *Letter to the American Church* for them to say to them, "Listen, you don't realize what is happening, but because it happened before, you can see exactly how evil took over. You can see it's the same confusion, the same theological confusion, the same theological excuses." Romans 13 we're supposed to with the government... It's diabolical sophistry to get people to say, "Well, that that's not my thing. I'm going to stay in my lane." And while you stay in your lane,

you're deaf to the cries of those who are suffering, deaf to the cries of those who are going to be suffering. Today of course, there's different issues. There's transgender madness being unleashed on our culture. How can the church be silent when children's lives are being ruined, when parents are confused, they're looking for leadership.

Many in churches are silent. They don't want to be divisive. That's one issue. You can go down the line. Are we talking about globalist, cultural, Marxism, critical race theory? All of these things, many churches have been silent. And so the question is, will enough people get it and wake up before it's too late? And we are five minutes from that point, I want to say it's late.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Eric, in the midst of this, I think there's some confusion that surges, by the way, that dilutes the responsibility of the church here. This quest for loving people. You know that we need to understand that people have-

Eric Metaxas: Of course.

Dr. Tim Clinton: ... to bring opinions. This woke-ism that's in culture that really isn't about truth. It's about your truth, my truth, whatever the truth is for the day thing. And we operate by feelings. But Eric, in the midst of it, you can get to a place where people begin to believe that they're fighting for the people. And so you see government on one side saying they're fighting for the people.

Eric Metaxas: But it's always the case. Stalin said he was fighting for the people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And so did Hitler.

Eric Metaxas: And so did Hitler, and so did Mount Saint Tom.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And then they wound up butchering millions of people in the midst of that.

Eric Metaxas: But that's the point. That is why you're talking about Satanic lies. Kim Jong Un, who has imprisoned 24 million people in North Korea, if you get out of line, you are tortured to death. He claims publicly to love the people. That's always the case with authoritarian regimes. They never say We hate the people. We are criminals. They're not going to say that, the devil is a liar. He's not going to tell you the truth. He's going to sell you the siren song of, "I care about you. I care about this, I care about that. And those other people don't care about you, so follow me." And by the time you're behind the bars, it's too late. This is an old story, but the point is, we didn't expect it would come to America. It has come to America and God looks to His people to understand it and to speak against it and to fight against it because we claim to believe Jesus defeated death on the cross.

If you believe that you don't fear death, you fear God and you're going to speak what he called you to speak. We've been able to get away with floating, going

with the culture, not really, really fighting. That's why James Dobson is such a hero to me. He's one of the handful of people who understood, this is our fight. This is our fight now, if we don't fight against whatever it was, no-fault divorce, if we don't fight against the denigration of the unborn, if we don't fight these things politically, it's going to get worse and worse and worse. And we are called by God to do these things. And so we are here now because much of the American church has taken a pass. They said, "You know what? Let the hotheads Dobson do it. I want people to like me. I want people to know what I'm for, not what I'm against."

Whatever cliché they could throw out there just so they could avoid actually sacrificing and actually fighting, which is what God calls us to do. And because of that, we're here now and we've only tasted the evil that is coming. When I think about what happened in Germany, if you were to talk to somebody in 1933, they'd say, "Ooh, it's pretty bad." They had no idea how bad it was going to get, but they still had a chance to fight. Because they didn't, it got so bad and because it went there, we in the American church, we're responsible. It's not like we could say, "Hey, who knows what's going to happen?" We can just look back and follow and see what's going to happen. It'll happen differently, but at the same time, it's the same thing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Eric, I know you stand strong against racism of any sort. You are big time against abuse and violence. You care about the disenfranchised. But in the midst of this, we hear a lot of people push back and say, but the way to deal with that is to love those people more and quote "focus on the gospel" and not taking anything away from the gospel. Because we know the power of God changes lives, it changes culture. In the midst of it, we can get lost in this. We can get into a spin where, like the German church believing they were following God and continuing on while the trains were coming by. I saw you referenced the story of the sing louder moment. Can you explain that, how the church can get lost in its journey, quote "to do right"?

Eric Metaxas: And let's think about this for a second. Okay. Bonhoeffer said, he flat out said, "Unless you speak out for the Jews, you cannot sing Gregorian chants." What he was basically saying is like, "You want to go and you want to worship God in your church. You need to shut your mouth. Do not worship God. Don't dare until you speak out for the Jews." In other words, God is not interested in your fake worship because He knows if you have not loved Him enough to speak out for those who are being crushed, you're a hypocrite and you are worship, whatever gospel you claim to be preaching, it's like your prayers are not going to reach Him because He already told you what you need to do. And you said, "No, I'm going to pretend..." It's like the kid that you're told take out the trash and you say, "Well, I washed the car."

It's like, "That's great, but guess what I told you to do? I told you to take out the trash. You did not do what I asked you to do." That's contempt for the one who asked you to do it. We were basically saying like, we're nicer and we're more focused on loving people than Jesus. And by the way, speaking the truth, if you

Speak the truth about the transgender issue, you are loving people. That's the point. Now, you can say it from a nasty heart. You can say it from a dirty, sinful heart, and God sees that, so you've got to say it out of love and out of compassion. God looks on the heart. But because God looks on the heart, it doesn't mean He doesn't care what you say. If somebody says like, "Hey, I'm Napoleon Bonaparte. I'm Julius Caesar. I'm Jesus Christ."

And you love them by saying, "Let me affirm you, Mr. Bonaparte, let me affirm you, Caesar, let me affirm you that you really are Jesus Christ." No, first of all, you weep for these people that are lost. But at the end of the day, your compassion has to extend on some level to telling them the truth about not just who they are, but about who we are in God's image. That is what it is to love. And so people looking for a cheap love, a way to make somebody feel good, but that's not what God is asking us to do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In the midst of this challenge of what we'd call, basically it's atheistic Marxism and more, what then is the responsibility of the church? And I know that the church has lost their voice, that it's silent in the face of evil.

Eric Metaxas: I think that's the question I asked the question in the book *Letter to the American Church*, what is the church? We have always had through history, this is going back into the Old Testament, there's a remnant. There are those who do what God asked them to do, and then there's others that are along for the ride. Are they part of God's people? Are they part of God's church? I leave that to the Lord who is merciful, but who is also a judge. But monolithically the church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be God's voice in a culture. Bonhoeffer says, "The church is the conscience of the state. When the church takes a pass, God will judge that church." Just when there were churches that took a pass on the slavery issue, do we think God would not judge them because those for whom he died, who were suffering under slavery? The Lord loved them and was looking to His people who were free, who had moral agency, who had political abilities, who had freedom to use their freedom for those who did not.

If they didn't do that, God judges them for that. Now, when you look at the end of the Scripture, right at the end of Revelation, it says, "Who's going to be cast in the lake of fire? The cowardly." In other words, God judges us. If you actually believe what you claim to believe, everybody says, "Oh, we're saved by faith."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Eric Metaxas: Okay, you're saved by faith, so let's talk about your faith. If your faith is real, it will be shown in good works. It will be shown in courage. If it is not, God judges you as not having faith, and you claim like, "Oh, it's only faith. It's faith. I'm saved by faith." But God will say, "Faith without works is dead." He says it in the scripture. We have forgotten that God expects us to live out our faith in every sphere, including the political, we are to do everything we can. And when we allow ourselves to buy these lies which are heresy and drift and drift and drift, we are held responsible more than anybody else.

And so I wrote the book, I feel the Lord led me to write this book. I don't say that kind of stuff lightly. I feel the Lord called me to write *Letter to the American Church* to reach those in the church who are still asleep, who are still quiet, who need encouragement and inspiration to say, "God is looking to you now and you will forever regret, if you do not stand and speak now, you will live with this regret. You have no idea." And take a page out of what happened to the German church. If you don't believe it, understand, because I write a lot in this book about Bonhoeffer and the German Church to show how it happened then, because they also thought that could never happen. It could never happen in a sophisticated culturally Christian place like Germany. It happened, and we need to understand that's exactly what is happening here, if we do what they did. And if we repent and speak up, God will deliver us, but we are not there. There are many, many, many that have not yet heard what God has to say on this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: These are unprecedented times, but we note this, and I believe this, God is at work. Eric's been a delight. Can't wait to have you back tomorrow because we're going to talk about things like Christian nationalism and the challenges before us. That quote again, "Move to silence the voices of those who care and who dare to care in this moment." And we're going to continue our conversation on your new book, *Letter to the American Church*. Our special guest again today has been Eric Metaxas culture commentator a voice for such a time as this. Thank you for joining us.

Eric Metaxas: My privilege. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: And we should always consider what we can do in our own lives to carry out God's word. That was Eric Metaxas with co-host Dr. Tim Clinton here on Family Talk. Be sure to tune in again tomorrow for part two of this conversation as they'll discuss how our freedom is guaranteed and indeed comes from God through Scripture. Friends, we are a listener supported broadcast ministry. When you partner with us financially, you are helping us reach others and maintain a strong Christian and conservative voice in the public square. With every dollar you donate, we are able to provide one more resource that can transform a family for the good. And I am excited to share that for the remainder of the month of June, we have been blessed by some special friends of the ministry with a matching grant of \$300,000. If God has placed it on your heart to give, you can make a secure donation online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or you can give a gift over the phone. 877-732-6825 is the number to call.

I'm Roger Marsh, and thanks for making us a part of your day. And from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, please know how much we appreciate your prayers and your financial support. May God continue to richly bless you and your family as you grow in relationship with Him. And be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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