

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

Week of January 3, 2021

Sunday Morning Service -----	25
Sunday Evening Service -----	16
Wed. Evening Service, 01/06/21 -----	12

AND THE PEOPLE "TUNED IN"...

Week of January 2, 2021

- Number of people who connected with our services on Facebook -

Sunday Morning Service:

116 Views 69 Engagements 172 People Reached

Sunday Evening Service:

77 Views 67 Engagements 97 People Reached

Wednesday Evening Service:

54 Views 109 Engagements 58 People Reached

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

- Week of January 3, 2021 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,455.12
Church Insurance Fund -----	\$ 10.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 01/03/21:	\$ 1,465.12

- Week of December 27, 2020 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 2,038.10
Church Insurance Fund -----	\$ 20.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 12/27/20:	\$ 2,058.10

- Week of December 20, 2020 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 811.50
Church Insurance Fund -----	\$ 20.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 12/20/20:	\$ 831.50

- Week of December 13, 2020 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 20.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 12/13/20:	\$ 20.00

- Week of December 6, 2020 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 868.52
Church Insurance Fund -----	\$ 506.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 12/06/20:	\$ 1,2374.52

- Week of November 29, 2020 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 190.00
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Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed to operate the church EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. Admit that you are a sinner.
2. Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.
3. Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.
4. You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).
5. By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.



THANK YOU For Your Continued Faithfulness In Giving!

During the early part this pandemic, we were unable to meet in the church-house. But - that did not mean that the expenses of having a church-house were suspended. We still had bills to pay - electricity, gas, water, trash pickup, phone, internet, facility insurance, copier lease, office supplies, etc., and, praise the Lord, His people kept praying, watching online, & supporting their church with their giving.

Some people only give when they are in attendance at church - sort of like paying for "services rendered" - but the truth is that they are robbing THEMSELVES of God's blessings when they withhold their tithes and offerings and only give when they are here (see Malachi 3:10). Thankfully, our people have remained faithful, in so many ways, during this crisis, including financially.

WE HAVE 3 WAYS YOU CAN GIVE DURING THIS CRISIS:

1. **By mail** - 23 East Wells Blvd., Sapulpa, OK 74066
2. **Drop it off** - call the Church Office to arrange it. 224-1924
3. **Online** - Go to the link below and give electronically:

<https://tithe.ly/give?c=433047>

WE ARE GLAD WE CAN NOW GATHER TOGETHER TO PRAISE GOD & STUDY HIS WORD TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH-HOUSE! YOUR GENEROUS GIFTS WILL HELP US KEEP UP WITH THE BILLS AND CONTINUE OUR OUTREACH EFFORTS!

Church Directory

Todd W. White -----	Pastor
Lois Mae Floyd -----	Pianist/ Organist
Mickie Shatwell -----	Evening Pianist
VOLUNTEER NEEDED! -----	Greeter
Larry Byars -----	S.S. Teacher
Larry & Mary Byars, Susan Strain -----	Outreach
Bertha Segebarr -----	Custodian
Flowers -----	Shirley & Brenda White
Sound/Video -----	Seth White



CHURCH INSURANCE FUND

Monthly Premium, Due 02/05/21-----	\$ 506.00
Amount Received To Date -----	\$ 0.00

TOTAL STILL NEEDED BY 02/05/21 ----- \$ 506.00

Thank You For Your Faithful Help With This Need!

SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY REMINDER

Volume XXVII

January 10, 2021

Number 2



JESUS SPEAKS TO US ABOUT FEAR

by Dr. W. A. Criswell
Pastor, First Baptist Church in Dallas
1944 - 2002

Preached November 24, 1985

"Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

- Matthew 10: 26-31

The word "fear not" was often on the lips of our Lord. You do not need to turn to these passages. I just point out a few of them in the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke. For example, when Simon Peter fell at the knees of the Lord Jesus, saying, "Depart from me; I am a sinful man, O Lord," the Lord answered, "Fear not, fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" [Luke 5:8, 10]; not fish, but men. In the eighth chapter of the Book of Luke, Jesus answered this centurion, saying, "Fear not; believe only. Fear not; only believe" [Luke 8:50]. As I turn the pages of the Gospel, in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Luke, thirty-second verse: "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" [Luke 12:32]. These are just typical of words that often were on the lips of our Lord: "Do not be afraid - Fear not."

Fear, worrisome fear, is of Satan. It arises out of our sinful nature. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"; for God hath not given us the spirit of fear - worrisome fear. That comes out of the netherworld, it comes out of our sinful response, it comes out of the mechanisms of our great adversary: worrisome fear.

You have it in the beginning just like that: "And Adam heard the voice of the Lord God as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day. And the Lord God said, Adam, where art thou? Where are you? And Adam replied, I was afraid, and I have hid myself; for I am naked. And the Lord God said, Who told you you were naked?" [Genesis 3:8-11]; and then the recounting of the eating of the forbidden fruit [Genesis 3:11-13], the breaking of the commandments of the Lord. That brings fear, worrisome fear, into our lives.

I read some time ago in a daily paper where a criminal had given himself up to the law enforcement officers. He said, "I can stand it no longer. Every knock at the door and every passing shadow brings terror to my soul." Worrisome fear, fear like that is a hydra-headed monster: it clouds our vision, it bedevils our lives, it lessens the ableness of our hands, it actually shortens our days. I read, in preparing this message, in a medical journal, I read where medical science says ninety percent of our illnesses are psychosomatic; they arise out of the emotions and the stresses of our lives. In preparing this sermon, I read where a doctor avowed that "Eighty percent of all of these who come into my clinic have diseases that are functional, not organic. They arise out of worrisome fear."

We're going to look at it in the Holy Scriptures; there is so much in the Bible. As I began the study of the sermon, I thought I could prepare this sermon and entitle it "The Bible And All That Is In It"; there is so much about fear - worrisome fear in the Bible. I could almost say that this Bible is a service manual concerning fear. Now as we study it, there is a friend or a foe in fear: it is baneful or it is beneficial, according to our relationship to God. There is a fear that is good. I can illustrate that in our common, ordinary-day lives. A surgeon is afraid of infection, so he sterilizes all of his instruments, and he washes and scrubs his hands, and on and on. He

(continued, inside)

is afraid of an invisible enemy: infection. If you see these big buildings, every one of those workmen will have on a hardhat. The supervisor, the superintendent, is afraid of accidents. If you go into any of these modern buildings, you'll find sprinkler systems in them and fire escapes on them: they are afraid of fire. There is a good fear, and that also is found in the Word of the Lord.

It depends upon our relationship with God whether the fear is a blessing or a curse. Look: it is a wonderful thing, according to the Word of God, that we fear the Lord. In the Psalms twice, and several times in the Book of Proverbs: **“The beginning of wisdom is in the fear of the Lord” [Proverbs 9:10].** Psalm 33:8: **“Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.”** And that is the meaning in the Bible of the fear of God: reverence before God, the awe as we look up into His face and reconnoiter the vast works of His hands. **“Let all the earth fear the Lord: let the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him” [Psalm 33:8].** Verse 18: **“Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy” [Psalm 33:18].** For a man to bow in deepest reverence and obeisance before God is right.

There's another response to God in our fear of the Lord, and that is seeking, in every way that we could know in our love for Him, not to disappoint Him or hurt Him. In First John 4:18: **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”** We seek to please our Lord in our love for Him, which is an obverse of the fear and reverence of God.

Young people, I want to illustrate that in your lives. It's a beautiful verse here in the Bible: **“There is no fear in love, no worrisome fear; perfect love casteth out fear” [I John 4:18].** Let me illustrate that in your life. I do not know of a commoner thing among teenagers, among young people, than their succumbing to peer pressure. The Lord only knows how many girls have gone down because of peer pressure, and the Lord only knows how many boys have compromised their convictions because of peer pressure. “You coward,” or “You sissy,” or “You thus-and-so,” and they compromise; tragedy beyond description. What is the matter is, we have deference to them, our peers, more than we have deference to God. If we love God supremely, according to the passage I'm expounding, if we love our Lord absolutely, above all else in the world, what we fear is not what these other boys and girls and young people say about us; what we fear is what God thinks about us. It moves us into another world.

Then there's one other: a good fear. In the twenty-eighth verse of the tenth chapter of Matthew, our Lord says to us, **“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” [Matthew 10:28].** You know, a preacher said—and he is correct—“There never was a time in the history of the Christian faith when the fear of judgment and of hell played so small a part in our response to God, in our religious faith.” I don't know when anybody has gone to church and heard a sermon on judgment and

hell and damnation. It has practically disappeared from our religious life and from our pulpit ministries. And yet, great God, what is it, when we die and fall into hell! To fear that, the judgment day, to fear that is something God commands of us: fearing the awesome repercussion of the sinful life in which all of us have fallen.

These are fears that are good: reverence before God; fearful of disappointing Him, of placing Him other than first in our lives; and fearing the great judgment of God, for which and against which Jesus came into this world to die for our sins that we might be saved [Hebrews 10:4-14; Matthew 18:11; Luke 19:10].

Now we're going to take the other facet, the other baneful tragedy of worrisome fear in our lives. Three hundred fifty and more times in this Holy Bible does the Lord say to us, “Do not be afraid. Fear not.” In that beautiful passage that we read together, **“What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee” [Psalm 56:3],** there are fears from which God would deliver us. The first is the fear of death and dying.

In Hebrews 2:14, the Bible says, **“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy [him] that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”**

Death: death is an enemy. That's First Corinthians chapter 15. Death is not a friend; death is an interloper [I Corinthians 15:21, 26, 54-56]. God never intended death: death is the result of our fallen nature; it's the repercussion from our sins [Romans 3:23, 6:23; Ezekiel 18:20]. And as we face death it is a horrible thing. There's no way in this earth that you can make death beautiful. I look on it; look on it all the time. When the skin begins to darken, with all that the mortician can do to make us look alive, death is still death. And as we face the inevitable day of our own decease, how shall I do it?

I have here a poem of some martyrs, three of them, in the mission field of China. And one of them remaining wrote this poem:

*To feel the Spirit's glad release?
To pass from pain to perfect peace,
The strife and strain of life to cease?
Afraid—of that? Death?*

*Afraid to see the Savior's face,
To hear His welcome, and to trace
The glory gleam from wounds of grace?
Afraid—of that?*

*A flash, a crash, a pierced heart;
Darkness, light, O Heaven's art!
A wound of His a counterpart?
Afraid—of that?*

*To do by death what life could not—
Baptized with blood a stony plot,*

*Till souls shall blossom from the spot,
Afraid—of that?*

- “Afraid? of What?” by E. H. Hamilton

*Afraid to die?
This is the death I am facing: it's life forever more.
It's not the end I'm nearing: it is entering heaven's door.
The way ahead is fairer than it's ever been before,
For it's glory, it's glory, over there.*

This is a poem written by a great pastor, just before he died:

*There is no fear in thinking that I'll soon meet Him face to face
The One who proved He loved me, by dying in my place
And how I long to thank Him for His mercy and His grace
For it's glory, it's glory, over there.
No pain and no frustrations, through all the passing years
No death or sorrows present, no terrors and no fears
For He Himself hath promised that He will wipe away all our tears
For it's glory, it's glory, over there.
Come quickly, oh come quickly, this blessed day for which I pine
When faith will turn to vision and each promise will be mine
And with His hosts in heaven and His presence I will shine
For it's glory, yes it's glory, over there.*

- “Glory Over Yonder,” Dr. H. H. Savage, FBC Pontiac, Michigan, 1967

“That He might deliver us, who through fear of death have been subject to bondage all our lives” [Hebrews 2:15]; death. God takes away our fear of death.

There's another fear from which God will deliver us, and as I study the Holy Scriptures I'm amazed that the Lord would speak of it. In Revelation 21:8: **“But the fearful, and unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” “But the fearful and unbelieving...”** Well, I looked at that as carefully as I could. What an astonishing thing! Then I tried to remember, looking at God's Word, how it is that I see it in human life. And that is one of the commonest things that I have met as a preacher of the gospel: “Pastor, I'm not going down that aisle. I'm afraid I couldn't live up to it,” or “I'm afraid that I would not be able to do all that Christ would want me to do.” “I'm not going down that aisle. I am afraid.” “I am reluctant; I am timid,” some; and others, they believe in falling from grace, and “I am afraid I can't trust the Lord with my soul, and I can't trust Him to save me forever. I am afraid.”

“But the fearful, and the unbelieving ... have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone” [Revelation 21:8]. How infinitely better just to trust the Lord Jesus! Trust Him. Don't look at yourself. Anytime you look at yourself you'll be abysmally discouraged. It's not good down here; it's wonderful up there. It's no good looking at us; let's look to Jesus. Let's magnify the Lord. Let's don't examine our faith, not even our lives; let's look to God. If we're going to examine somebody, let's examine the Lord. If we're going to touch somebody, let's touch the Lord. If we're going to touch somebody, let's touch Him; this way, not down here. With great courage and commitment, let's give our hearts and lives to the blessed Jesus [Luke 9:23].

Now I have one other, with three parts. The deliverance from worrisome fear: the providences of life, tomorrow, “Lord, Lord, what about tomorrow?” Little ants, little tiny ants will clean a carcass cleaner than a mighty, bold lion, and little, worrisome fears will hurt us more than big problems that we might face on any possibility in the future. Worrisome fears; we are conditioned to it in life. One of the strangest things, how we are thus conditioned to be afraid. May I take one or two instances of that, so you can see what I mean by it?

All of our people, all of us, stand in fear of assault, of a burglar, and we lock our homes, and we put in alarm systems, and we turn on lights, and we put in deadbolts, and Lord only knows what all. But nobody thinks that about an automobile. But when you read the statistics, for every seven that are hurt in a house, there are twenty-eight that are killed in an automobile. But we're not conditioned to think of an automobile as being an instrument of terror; but we are the house. When we get in that house, oh! the possibility of assault. Isn't that a strange thing, how we can be conditioned to be afraid?

I read Aesop's fable about the mouse that lived next door to the magician, and the little mouse was afraid of a big cat, so the magician put the mouse in the body of a big cat; made a big cat out of him. Then, being a cat, he was afraid of the big dog, so the magician took the cat and made him a big dog, so he wouldn't be afraid of the dog. But the dog was afraid of the big tiger, so the magician made the dog into a big tiger. And the tiger was afraid of the man with his bow and arrow, and the magician, being disgusted, said, “You're going back to being a mouse again, because you've got the fearful heart of a mouse.” Now, we are like that: the worrisome fears of our lives press upon us all the time; worrying about tomorrow, fearful about the morrow.

Now, there are some things that are very poignantly brought to us, one factual, one pragmatic, and one spiritual, about our worrisome fears. First, the factual: the Lord says, **“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” [Proverbs 14:27].** You don't have to be that way. These are statistics that I read half a dozen times in different books: of our fears, forty percent never happen; thirty percent are foolish worries about things that can't be changed; twelve percent are needless worries about our health; ten percent are about petty, miscellaneous matters; and eight percent demand our attention, things that we ought to take care of—just worrisome fears. Those are facts.

In my reading, I came across an Englishman that I'd never heard of in my life. His name is [J. Arthur] Rank, and he had ulcers, and they were terrible, and he had to do something about them. And they were caused by the stress and worry of his life, so he took somebody's advice and he said, “I'm going to choose one day a week in which to worry. I'm going to choose one day a week. And I'm going to get me a box, and I'm going to call it worry box,” and all of the worries that he had, he wrote them out, and he put them in that box, and on Wednesday he would open them so he could worry about them. And when he opened them

on Wednesday to worry about the things that he'd written out and put in his worry box, half of them had already gone away, and the other half he couldn't do anything about. I thought, "Isn't that smart?" Worrisome.

All right, pragmatic: facing our worries pragmatically. In the story of the talents, that fellow that received one talent hid it, and then he said, "*I knew thee; thou art a hard man,*" and on and on, "*and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. I was afraid. I was afraid*" [Matthew 25:24-25]. Isn't it a lot better, instead of just worrying and instead of just being afraid, isn't it better to do something? This one-talent man, so condemned by the Lord [Matthew 25:26-29], did nothing: he hid his talent. Wouldn't it be better to get busy and do something?

For us to worry about what we cannot change is senseless. For us to worry about what we can change is stupid: let's change it. For me to worry about the birds that fly over my head or for the possibility of Halley's Comet splashing into the earth is crazy. Not a thing in the world I can do about those birds flying up there over my head; not a thing in the world I can do about Halley's Comet. For me to worry about things that I can't change is senseless. For me to worry about things that I can change is stupid: let me get at it, get at it. Do it.

I remember as a boy, as we faced the days of the Depression, poor, I needed to work, I had to do something, and they said, "There's not a possibility in the earth. You're in school, and this is just summertime for you. Not a possibility in the earth that you can get a job." Well, instead of worrying because we were so everlastingly poor and had nothing at all, and I had to go to school, what I did in Amarillo, where we lived—my mother took me to go to school there in high school—what I did, I walked down those railroad tracks, every one of them, the Santa Fe, the Rock Island, and the Colorado Southern, I walked down those railroad tracks, and every time I came to a company that abutted one of those railroad tracks, I went in and told them who I was and I needed a job. And I got one. I got one. It was with G. I. Case Threshing Machine Company. And you know what? After I'd been working for that bossman there—that was the regional headquarters of the company where they distributed parts and sold all those G. I. Case threshing machines—when I got through, you know, the head of that, the regional, he said, "You know what? We'd like to send you to college. And we'd like for you to put your life in G. I. Case Threshing Machine Company." And I told him, "No, I can't do that. I'm going to be a preacher." He thought I was crazy. He couldn't imagine my being a preacher; unthinkable to him, being a preacher.

There's no time in your life, I don't care what it is—when you are worried, or when you are fearful, get up and do! Do it. Get up and do. For you to sit and worry, for you to lament and cry or to wring your hands, don't! Remember what this one-talent man said: "*I was afraid, and I didn't do anything.*" Don't be that way. Pragmatically, empirically, do something; get to work.

I spent one summer washing dishes in a hotel when I was a boy. "Pastor, isn't that beneath your dignity, washing dishes in a

hotel?" No, sir. I needed help. I needed a job. I was going to school and didn't have any money, and rather than lament or wring my hands or wait on somebody else to try to help me or support me—man, God gave me two hands and a heart to try. Get with it, get with it. Well, I've got to close...

I want to say one other thing about our worries, and that concerns our spiritual help. Our Lord Jesus said, in the beautiful passage in **John 14:27**, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

Sweet people, look at that just for a minute. When the Lord says that, "*Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,*" isn't it possible **He** knows more about it than I do? He has been there, and I haven't been. He knows the way; He has walked it. He has lived the life. There's no facet of it He hasn't experienced, and I can trust Him for the answer. He comes back and says to me, "*You do not need to be afraid, not you.*" Can I trust Him for that, can I, that the Lord would be with me? I cannot imagine in my wildest imagination, I cannot imagine Jesus being baffled or defeated, with no answers. Always, He is Lord. He is in control. He has the whole world in His hands [Psalm 95:4]. He has you and me in His hands, and I can trust Him [John 10:28-30]. I'm not to be afraid: He is with me.

John spoke of it like this: "*Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace*" [John 1:16], on top of grace, abounding grace: God's blessings of remembrance. I sometimes think of that as I face the day of my death. I would be frank to admit, if you were to tell me, "Pastor, in five minutes you're going to go out that door and you're going to die," I'd be fearful, I'd be afraid. The reason is, I'll be given dying grace when time comes for me to die, and my time to die hasn't come yet. God gives me living grace now, abounding grace now, working grace now; and when the time comes for me to die, He will give me dying grace. As the manna was fresh for each day and couldn't be hoarded, just for each day [Exodus 16:15-21], so God's grace is for each day. And when that time comes, it'll be:

*O precious cross! O glorious crown!
O resurrection day!
Ye angels, from the stars come down
And bear my soul away.*

- "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone," Thomas Shepherd

Grace, God's ableness and presence for each exigency and each hour; and I don't have to worry. I don't have to be troubled in heart or burdened in spirit. God is with us. ■



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NEWS OF INTEREST TO CHRISTIANS

□ **LEADERS OF U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DEFYING GOD WITH "INCLUSIVE" LANGUAGE** - In fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the Democratic leadership of the 117th U.S. House of Representatives is attempting to defy God with an "inclusive language" policy. The new rules would "*address issues of inequities on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or national origin.*" This is impossible nonsense, of course, since addressing alleged inequality on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity creates inequality against sex and religion, etc. The rule would outlaw the use of *he and she, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, husband, wife, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandson, or granddaughter*, among others. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the new measures would make the House of Representatives "the most inclusive in history." True, and it would also make it the most stupid in history.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27).

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:2-4).

□ **UNITED METHODIST MINISTER INVOKES HINDU GOD AT OPENING OF U.S. CONGRESS** - Emanuel Cleaver, an ordained United Methodist minister and Democrat Representative, opened the first session of the 117th U.S. Congress by praying in the name of a Hindu god. He concluded, "*We ask it in the name of the monotheistic God, Brahma, and god known by many names by different faiths. Amen and a-woman.*" The term "amen" has nothing to do with gender, of course. It simply means "**so be it.**" According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, "*Brahma was born from a golden egg and created the earth and all things on it. Later myths describe him as having come forth from a lotus that issued from Vishnu's navel.*"

□ **WALL STREET JOURNAL STANDS UP AGAINST CANCEL CULTURE** - The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) is standing up for freedom of speech against the totalitarian cancel culture. After the WSJ published an editorial on Dec. 11 by Joseph Epstein poking some fun at Joe Biden's wife, Jill, for flaunting the title of "Dr.," there was a "flood of media and Twitter criticism," angry tirades demanding an apology, retraction, lifelong ban of Epstein, and the resignation of the WSJ editorial editor. Epstein was sharply criticized by Northwestern University, where he taught some 20 years ago. The school went so far as to remove Epstein's name from its website listing past faculty.

In his reply to the critics, Paul Gigot, editor of the Wall Street

Journal's editorial page, wrote, "*My guess is that the Biden team concluded it was a chance to use the big gun of identity politics to send a message to critics as it prepares to take power. There's nothing like playing the race or gender card to stifle criticism. ... these pages aren't going to stop publishing provocative essays merely because they offend the new administration or the political censors in the media and academe.*" In a report on the WSJ brouhaha, The New Criterion observed, "*Last month, after the electors met to cast their votes for him, Joe Biden once again made a plea for unity. 'Now it's time to turn the page ... to unite and to heal,' he said. We applaud that sentiment. But we wonder what he means by 'unite' and 'heal.' To judge by the actions of the institutions supporting his cause in this sorry episode, 'turning the page' might just be euphemism for sweeping everything and everyone out of step with his program into the oubliette*" ("The 'Dr.' will see you now," The New Criterion, Jan. 2021).

□ **CIRCUIT COURT STRIKES DOWN BAN AGAINST "CONVERSION THERAPY"** - In late November, 2020, a panel on the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals effectively struck down two Florida bans on sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) that sought to ban counselors from putting minors through "conversion therapy." The court ruled that the laws violated the First Amendment by restricting free speech. When the City of Boca Raton and the County of Palm Beach banned SOCE counseling, licensed marriage and family therapists Robert Otto and Julie Hamilton sued, seeking an injunction to prevent the city and county from enacting their bans. ... They argued that "their clients typically have sincerely held religious beliefs conflicting with homosexuality, and voluntarily seek SOCE counseling in order to live in congruence with their faith and to conform their identity, concept of self, attractions, and behaviors to their sincerely held religious beliefs." ... As Judge Grant wrote, "The ordinances thus codify a particular viewpoint--sexual orientation is immutable, but gender is not—and prohibit the therapists from advancing any other perspective when counseling clients." ... This involves an unconstitutional restriction of free speech. "Whether therapy is prohibited depends only on the content of the words used in that therapy, and the ban on that content is because the government disagrees with it. And whether the government's disagreement is for good reasons, great reasons, or terrible reasons has nothing at all to do with it. All that matters is that a therapist's speech to a minor client is legal or illegal under the ordinances based solely on its content," Judge Grant wrote.

Lawsuits against "conversion therapy" bans received a new lease on life thanks to NIFLA v. Becerra. In that decision, Justice Clarence Thomas explicitly struck down California's law forcing crisis pregnancy centers to advertise abortion under the argument that states can regulate "professional speech." In striking down California's law, Thomas referenced a case (King v. Governor of New Jersey) involving bans on sexual orientation change efforts. Otto v. Boca Raton represents a landmark case for therapy freedom."