A Word On Covid-Response

(by Wilson Adams)

Please stop shaming (as if there isn’t enough already).

Churches are turning into shaming centers when it comes to Covid-responses. If you don’t wear a mask and don’t get vaccinated, you are shamed. If you do wear a mask and do get vaccinated, you are shamed. It cuts both ways. Then there’s the sacrilegious, *“If Jesus was here, He would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”*

*“Love your neighbor as yourself...”*

*“Love your neighbor doesn’t mean I violate my conscience...”*

Back and forth.

Church leaders do a disservice when they overstep into the role of medical managers. It’s not as simple as you think. There are those advised by physicians to not wear face-coverings (asthma sufferers). For those with trauma experiences, PTSD, sexual assaults, anxiety, etc., face coverings can trigger panic responses. Do we make allowances for these or shame-shun them?

Counselors work overtime dealing with those struggling with anxiety issues related to churches and these decisions. More than a few preachers are ready to call it quits.

If church leaders start policing facial coverings, what will stop them from policing vaccinations? (I’ve heard that proposed). Where will it end? It won’t. Well, it will end... in division.

Crazy idea: make allowances for both. There are ways to accommodate differing consciences without shaming. This is where leadership steps up and pushes the devil out. What a testimony to the cancel culture!

**• If some feel safer wearing a mask and/or getting the vaccine –Yes!**

**• If some feel a conscience issue and/or have a medical, emotional, or doubt issue -Yes!**

Work-places are divided over mandates. Will worship-places follow? I pray leaders will accommodate differing consciences without shaming. “United we stand, divided we \_\_\_\_.” Guess who smiles then?

Stop the shame-blame and work for a solution. There’s a lot at stake...

The Mind of Christ

(by Paul Earnhart)

In **Philippians 2:5** Paul, in a few words, focuses the Christian life: ***“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”***

The mind of Jesus was the mind of Deity. In Him dwelt ***“all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”*** (**Colossians 2:9**). In Him were ***“all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden”*** (**Colossians 2:3**). One can only imagine such massive intelligence and power that both conceived this immense universe with all its complexity and brought it into existence out of nothing. In **Romans**, Paul wonders at it in awestruck amazement: ***“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”*** (**11:33**).

But it is not about the infinite knowledge and wisdom of Christ that Paul speaks in Philippians. It was a lust for that which originally seduced us into rebellion—the arrogant dream that we

could be as wise as God—independent, autonomous (**Genesis 3**). We are creatures, not creators, and that is our destiny.

What the apostle addresses is an attitude of heart and character, seen first in Christ and now to be imitated in those of us who follow Him. We remain a bit astonished still at the words of Jesus in His great invitation, ***“for I am meek and lowly in heart”*** (**Matthew 11:29**). How can one who rules the universe say that? Because it is absolutely true.

The humility of God was expressed in the incarnation. But it did not begin nor end there; it is an unchanging quality of Deity (**Malachi 3:6**). God became flesh and lived among us. The voice of Infinity was heard in the cry of a newborn baby who mewled helplessly in a feed trough in Bethlehem. And what lowly birth, with only His parents and some nondescript shepherds in attendance. No midwives, no family, no friends, no admiring throngs sighing over this infant. And that is the way He chose it, the only man who ever chose to be born. Have this mind in you.

The mind of Christ is a **self-emptying mind**. He came into the world not because He owed us anything or was even wanted, but because we needed Him. Though in ***“the form [the very essence] of God,”*** Paul says, He did not think the glory and honor due Him was something to be unyieldingly held on to, but gave up His *“rights”* and became a servant of the humblest sort (**Philippians 2:6-7**). Have this mind in you.

The mind of Christ is also **compassionate**. Jesus certainly healed the sick and suffering, but it was the spiritual lostness of people that brought His greatest heartache and concern (**Matthew 9:35-36**). His feeling for individual souls is seen in the joy that speaking to one sinful Samaritan woman gave Him (**John 4:32-34**). And there was the notoriously sinful woman who interrupted a banquet at which He sat, rushing in heedlessly to anoint His feet with oil that mingled with her penitential tears. She made herself terribly vulnerable to Him and to all, but seemed certain that for all her sins the Jesus she had been carefully observing would never reject her (**Luke 7:36-50**). This woman’s act scandalized the host, but Jesus rejoiced. Have this mind in you.

The mind of Christ is a **servant mind**. His every thought & action was selfless, directed not toward His own needs but of others. The lowliness of His spirit was startlingly demonstrated at the Passover supper before He died. With towel and basin Jesus stooped suddenly before His disciples and began to wash their feet like a common household slave (**John 13:3-17**). It was a shocking thing for God the Creator to bow in humble service to His creatures. But, as He frequently explained, ***“…the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”*** (**Matthew 20:28**). Have this mind in you.

And then there was His **meekness** and **gentleness** (**2 Corinthians 10:1**). Although He had unimaginable power always at His command, it was never used to clear away the ungodly men who treated Him with a hateful cunning in His life and with cynical cruelty in His death (**Matthew 26:51-54**). No indignity, however grave, was ever allowed to turn Him from fulfilling His Father’s gracious purposes. Ironically, it was the disciple who defended Him against arrest, rather than the arresting mob, He rebuked. What great strength there was in Him! Have this mind in you.

And finally, and most remarkable, there was His **forgiving love**. His first words from the cross, struggling in His agony for breath to speak, were an appeal to God for mercy upon the very men who were murdering Him so brutally (**Luke 23:24**). Not even in the creation of the world was the awesome power of God so demonstrated as in those few magnificent words. What a man He was! Have this mind in you.