

**General Topics :: The Democratic Spirit****The Democratic Spirit - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2012/5/15 23:34**

I know that it is somewhat of a faux pas here to put parameters around a discussion, but I would like to ask that anyone who responds to this do so in a personal manner. By that I mean, would it be possible for people to answer this question in such a way as to reflect their own actions and experience, positive or negative. I am interested to see if anyone would take a bird's eye view of their own personal walk and would be able to make an objective discernment of the "spirit" in which they operate.

Does the fact that you have been brought up in a democratic culture affect your "church life?"

If you have never thought about this before. Please think and pray before responding. Thoughtful responses make for good fellowship.

Re: The Democratic Spirit - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2012/5/15 23:39

And by the way I have no intention whatsoever for this to be a political discussion. Please do not be distracted by the word "democratic." I mean its use merely in the cultural context.

Re: The Democratic Spirit, on: 2012/5/16 0:19

prayed.okay, when i read the words "church life", i understand exactly why the Essenes got as far away from Jerusalem as they could....and i write that in love, not contention.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2012/5/16 0:22

Brother Areadymind,

The democratic spirit, I believe it has affected many people and has also crept into church life by so many. Over the years since I have been in leadership of a local church I have come to realize that we need to pray for the will of God and not to go by feelings or opinions. The sad thing is that many strive to persuade the majority to their point of view. They seem to have their own agenda of what they want and as long as they can get the majority then it will be right to do. I have never liked the idea that the majority rules as to thinking that this is the best way because many times the majority are wrong if they have not sought the Lord wanting His will above everything else. The Lord and His will should be our primary focus and being willing to change and adapt to the leading of His Spirit and Word should be our desire.

I hope in the future to do more praying before acting on anything, than to act on feelings and emotions before I have prayed to God about it to be lead by His Spirit.

Blessings to you...from brother rbanks

Re: The Democratic Spirit - posted by philomastix, on: 2012/5/16 0:46

It seems to me that it's easy to point to instances in Acts, wherein spiritual leaders pray and act on behalf of the community, and use such examples to criticize the methods of church governance common in the west. Maybe we ought to be able to function in such a way now, but we don't and so what do we do?

I appreciate the notion, in the abstract, that the function of church governance, in my experience, is influenced by the ideals of democracy. This is not to say that my local congregation is 'democratically' operated, but the members do have input into leadership and have an opportunity to vote on governance. Such a system aims to hinder any one person from gaining too much influence and power over the community. I can see, in the evangelical congregations with which I've had experience, a desire to avoid the hierarchies of power and influence associated with mainline denominations and the Roman Catholic system. Power is so easily abused, though democracies are so easily influenced by effective and eloquent speech or cronyism.

Actually, looking again at Acts 15 (NASB), the proceedings there can easily be read as reflecting a democratic spirit. The council meets, views are shared, and, guided by James, the letter is crafted, giving the instructions that "seemed good

" to the whole council. I read this as one influenced by the democratic culture you invoke, but it is easy to read it so.

More difficult, I find, is the impulse to approach God with this same democratic spirit. I'll not present myself as one more spiritual than I am, one who struggles not with the desire to assert rights or demand certain treatment, even the desire to subvert authority or oppose it on absurd principles. I have great difficulty with those teachers (including the prominent preachers hosted on this site) who assert that we MUST discard all rights at the cross and in the approach to God. I don't say that they are wrong, but I, in moments of honesty, wish they were. I wonder at those times if our metaphors of relationship to God would be different if the Chosen People of the Old Testament were the ancient Athenians, rather than the Jewish people. Would Christ have preached the Republic of Heaven, rather than the Kingdom?

So in answer to your question, Areadymind, I think the influence of the "democratic culture" is effective for organization, when those concerned want to make it work, but makes the humble and faithful apprehension of God difficult. I've tried to be quite honest, and I recognize that some of this may cause some to bristle. Please understand that I do not profess that my struggles are correct, and I hope that the context of this discussion allows for the sharing of such a struggle. I do not mean to sow discord.

Re: The Democratic Spirit - posted by onemite, on: 2012/5/16 1:02

I know there are different ways to look at this. Here is one side. This doesn't so much pertain to my church life, but it pertains to my walk with Christ.

I think the 'democratic' spirit was visible in the people when King Saul spared some in war and told Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice."

In a similar way, when I have been disobedient to the Word of God and what He was revealing to me in it, by looking around at the majority of churches to see if their understanding was the same- and when it wasn't, I dismissed what was being revealed to me as being my own interpretation. I was guilty of listening to and putting my value in the majority, and not the Holy Spirit.

Re: The Democratic Spirit - posted by twayneb (), on: 2012/5/16 7:43

Areadymind: This is an interesting question. I was brought up in a body of believers where every major decision, including whether or not the pastor stayed on for another year, was brought to vote by the congregation. With democratic ideas firmly entrenched in our political culture (though we are not a true democracy) I can see why this method of decision making was used. But it always struck me that we might have a decision made with a margin of two or three votes. Did half of us miss God on the deal? I always said that either half or all of us missed God in these situations.

Re: , on: 2012/5/16 7:52

The organized church in America operates in democracy. The New Testament church operates in the freedom of the Spirit in submission to the mind of Christ.

Bearnaster.

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2012/5/16 8:06

The Church is not a democracy. It is not governed by majority rule. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and the will of the Lord can be known by the Body through prayer. The carnal reasonings of men have led to many a Church split, because the decisions were made on the basis of man's opinions instead of the leadership of the Holy Spirit through prayer.

Mike

Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2012/5/16 8:07

Does the fact that you have been brought up in a democratic culture affect your "church life?"

For me personally the answer is yes. I have often struggled with an attitude of entitlement, or maybe a better way to put it is "its my right". I have found myself at times walking out my life with Christ(church life) with this attitude as if I have a special right to say what I think(even if at times that means arguing) I have a right to make sure my opinions are heard(even if it means sometimes I yell them in anger)I have the right to seek out my own happiness(even if that sometimes involves self living) the list goes on and on. I realize that being brought up in a culture where self is told over and over again that it "has rights" can be a very real struggle, there is a difference between freedom in JESUS and "rights." One is given to me the other is expected by self. I can't tell you how many times I have said, "I have the right to say or do" you can fill in the blank with the rest. This attitude happens because I have this mentality of its "my right" to say and do what I want. Truth is GOD does not give me that right, self does, GOD instructs me to obey HIM, to submit unto HIM and often I have learned when I have opened my mouth to speak HE would have me be silent...for me I think growing up in a the culture that I have can feed self because its self that often demands rights. Its CHRIST who calls me to die to self...

These were just some of my initial thoughts after reading your question and seeking the LORD. Hope my response was not to confusing or off topic to what you had in mind.

God Bless
mj

Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2012/5/16 8:50

I am appreciating some of the answers so far. I will not have time to respond to anything until later tonight. Again I would like to request that responses personally reflect your own walk in some way.

I also am not avoiding throwing my cents into the thread. I am just still praying and thinking about how to respond to my own question.

Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2012/5/17 1:16

"I've tried to be quite honest, and I recognize that some of this may cause some to bristle. Please understand that I do not profess that my struggles are correct, and I hope that the context of this discussion allows for the sharing of such a struggle. I do not mean to sow discord." -Philomastix

This is exactly the kind of answer I was hoping to see. Thank you for your honesty Philo.

The bible says that we are to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will exalt us. While discarding all rights at the cross does seem brutal on the side previous to it. The payoff for Christ was resurrection. He humbled himself to the point of death but also "became" the Lord of Glory as a result. Resurrection follows the cross. The whole gospel and not just part needs to be emphasized. For if we suffer with him so also shall we reign with him.

As to your Athenian question, which is rather interesting, and something I had not ever thought of, but it does raise an interesting point. My inclination is to say no, because God specifically chose Israel, but if you remember right, Israel forced the idea of a monarchy, at least the human agency of it upon God. If you remember right God lamented that Israel wanted a king like the other nations because he wanted to be their king, I have found this to be one of the saddest laments in scripture.

I have been thinking about this concept for a while because as I look back on my young Christianity I see that in many situations I looked a gift horse in the mouth due to my entitled democratic way of seeing things. I have been through phases of bitterness and loss of joy for way to long in my walk simply because I am too much like my culture, and less like the culture of the kingdom.

I have also noticed over the past few years how people hop from church body to church body hoping to find rest for their souls but they never do because what they are wanting is somebody to affirm their sin and belligerence, and soon as God uses a brother to reveal that sin...off they fly to foist their problems on another flock. From flock to flock they travel, in

search of greener pasture, only to find the pasture would have become green had they allowed the Lord to carry them through the valley of the shadow of their own prideful death. The sad thing I have noticed is that it is consistent that people will use the phrase "doctrinal differences," which is just a fancy way of lying.

I have come to realize that my democratic spirit hampered my walk so much in my youth because God was using brothers who had authority in the body of Christ to reveal a severely handicapped little petulant boy. Instead of realizing that the authority they had was from the Lord. In my heart I devised every possible reason why I did not need to submit to their authority. I slandered them in my heart.

One time, after months of holding this grudge toward one particular pastor, I approached him after a teaching he did and confessed my sin to him. He forgave me and I wept for hours like a lost little child...

What I have not realized until more recently is that even though I sought forgiveness, I think I still justified my reasons. It is amazing how deceiving the human heart is. When somebody exercises the authority of God into our lives, it seems that we are faced with two options. Submit, or grieve the Spirit, and in so doing become more of what you already were.

I was reading the Epistle to the Ephesians by St. Ignacius last night and he made such a bold proclamation about being united under the authority of God's chosen servants that I could almost not believe what I was reading. But all day long I have been considering how true it is. He basically claimed in a nutshell that we will never experience the full sanctification of the Spirit in our lives if we do not submit to the Godly authorities placed over us in the Church.

I can personally attest to the 100% accuracy of this statement in my life. I wasted so many years of my Christianity harboring a bitter attitude toward brothers in Christ and I masked it all under the guise of Doctrine or Theology...the truth is, I was just a typical rebellious punk who saw all people with authority as a threat. I know that I for one have allowed my culture and my democratic spirit to hamper my walk with God.

I am now convinced that I was not meant or created to possess my own personal will and freedom in opposition to authority. I was created to submit that to God. I now have learned that I want to be a subject in the Kingdom of God more than any other thing. Kicking against the goads is not only painful. It leaves pointless scars. There is more freedom to be discovered in submission to God's authority and how he delegates that out than there is in foisting my will on others, and using supposedly christian sounding reasoning to back up my own sinful pride.

We have been called into a monarchy. How can we say that we submit to God whom we cannot see, if we are unable to submit in the simplest of ways to our brothers whom we do see?

Re: - posted by philomastix, on: 2012/5/17 1:26

You wrote:

"The bible says that we are to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will exalt us. While discarding all rights at the cross does seem brutal on the side previous to it. The payoff for Christ was resurrection. He humbled himself to the point of death but also "became" the Lord of Glory as a result. Resurrection follows the cross. The whole gospel and not just part needs to be emphasized. For if we suffer with him so also shall we reign with him."

These words exude wisdom. I'll not respond at length now, but will reflect. Thanks for your thoughts.

Re: The Democratic Spirit - posted by ArtB (), on: 2012/5/17 1:31

The democratic Spirit normally is defined as "political and social - equality."

It is a myth.

Things often are not as they seem.

From George Orwell's Animal Farm:

"ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS".

I believe there does not exist true Political and Social Equality among any nation. The politicians, the very wealthy, those with power, those who control the mass media, the top 1%, the Secular Humanists, have way far more influence on government laws, policies, and public education, than do us average citizens. Even wealthy and well placed foreigners have more influence on our politics and our societal values than our average citizen. And their secular, social, educational, and political values are far different than the Christian values we esteem.

We who are Jesus Christ Disciples. We Christians are in the world, but we are not of the world. Our allegiance is to God and His Word, that we should love one another, and even our enemies, and do the good toward all peoples, the good that He created us to do. And we will bless those who curse us, and forgive those who wrong us. And we depend on the Holy Spirit to transform our very nature, that we may know and do that good through genuine love, and to make amends upon our failures which come about due to our many personal imperfections.

Apart from God, the peoples of this world will descend to:

From 2 Timothy Chapter 3:

" ... , that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."