

Christians and Politics?

Nobody loves a politician. It's difficult, challenging and messy work. Jeffrey Donaldson is a Christian who has been an MP for almost eight years. Here is his view on why you should step off the sidelines.

I remember well the dilemma that confronted me, when I committed my life to Christ in 1989 at the age of 26. I was deeply interested and involved in the politics of Northern Ireland and had risen quickly through the ranks of the Unionist Party to find myself elected at the age of 22 as Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont. In the early years of my political career, like so many people, I was totally focussed on personal progression and my motto might have been 'I did it my way'. However, when I committed my life to Jesus he gave me a new motto 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.' (Proverbs 3:5-6) So what would that mean for my involvement in politics? Was it right for a Christian to be involved in what many regarded as a 'dirty business'?

Daniel and political influence

I PRAYED ABOUT this and sought guidance from the word of God. Over a period of time, God revealed to me that there were many occasions in the Bible when he took his people and placed them in positions of political responsibility. Prime examples of these were the stories of Daniel and Joseph, who were both placed by God in positions of political responsibility so that they could play a key part in his plan for the nation at that time.

Why should it be any different today? Has God decreed that Christians are to exclude themselves from the political process? I have not found such a decree anywhere in Scripture. Is our God any less powerful today that he cannot influence the direction of an entire nation through the obedience of one man or woman? I don't think so. Indeed, I believe that God is longing for some Daniels to step into his will and influence the direction of the UK today.

The power of prayer

IN VICTORIAN TIMES, William Wilberforce and the 'Clapham Sect' had a tremendous influence on the moral val-

ues of this nation. They dedicated themselves selflessly to prayer for their nation and then acted in Parliament to bring a Christian witness to bear on the laws that were passed. As the morality of the nation improved, so God was pleased to bless the UK in a way that is unparalleled in modern times. The secret of their success was undoubtedly the power of prayer. As Christians, we know that prayer changes things.

Are we making the most of the power of prayer to change the direction of our nation today?

Standing in the gap

THE BIBLE TELLS us that 'If my people, who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.' (2 Chronicles 7:14) Today, God is exhorting Christians to once more stand in the gap for this nation. Every single Christian has a part to play.

For some, this means stepping into God's will for our lives by serving him in the world of elected politics. For most though, it means a rededicated commitment to pray for our Government, Parliament and nation as well as the wider world that we live in. Note this command from God: 'I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may lead peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.' (1 Timothy 2:1-2) To be effective in this prayer, we need to take an interest in politics so that we can pray in an informed way and make specific requests to God. I believe the personal intercessions of the people of Christ can really transform the UK into a righteous

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Dromore in County Down. He first held public office at the age of 22 in the Northern Ireland Assembly and was elected to the House of Commons in 1997. Jeffrey is Vice Chairman of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship and chaired the National Prayer Breakfast at Westminster in 2002. He also chairs the Prayer for Parliament group which encourages Christians throughout the UK to pray for Parliament and the nation.

nation again. 'Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.' (Proverbs 14:34)

Will you step forward and stand in the gap for this nation? How? By praying for your local MP and all Christians who are involved in politics and government. Your prayers can make a real difference. The Prayer for Parliament group website at www.prayerforparliament.com will help you pray in an informed way and you can also arrange to receive monthly prayer bulletins.

Finally, please pray for more Daniels to come forward and serve God in the world of politics. You never know, God might just call you!