

1 Timothy 2:1-2

Intercede with government for its victims

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, **supplications**, [Greek: petitions] **prayers, interces-sions, and giving of thanks**, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (KJV)

*As God grants opportunity,
our God calls us to keep folks free
from Laws From Hell smack in the way
of good in what we do and say.
Ask lawmakers to do what's right
while we make sure this is God's fight.
Let's request, on behalf of others,
justice, for they're Jesus' brothers.
Thank God when their laws are good!
Thank them! They did what they could.*

Verse 1 tells us what we must do in order to reach the goal of verse 2, that government will leave us in peace so we may lead an honest, Godly life without going to jail. Verse 1 lists four categories of communication.

Christians fulfill the goal of 1 Timothy 2:1-2 to get government to let us live honest, godly lives without going to jail, by reasoning, organizing, and acting together to “**petition**” our representatives to base laws upon the principles of Heaven rather than of Hell, “**intercede**” for others harmed by our public policies, and “**thank**” lawmakers who serve us well (which is a wonderful way to build bridges with leaders). Such activity begins with **prayer**, without which we lack wisdom and direction, but God’s list doesn’t *end* with prayer as is so widely assumed even by Bible commentators and translators.

Following the lesson of James 2:14-17, members will do these things together to the extent they can, trusting God to guide and enable them, rather than expecting God to do what they could have done so they can do nothing.

It is everyday American experience, that where the goal is to reduce harassment from the government, communication with government officials (“lobbying”, we call it today) is a proven way to reach that goal.

But the popular version of 1 Timothy 2:1 is that neither of its four categories are about communicating a single word to anyone in government – all four

categories mean the same thing: prayer. To God alone. We are supposed to solve our problems with government by talking to God only – not by talking with our governors!

We are *not* supposed to reach this goal by **petitions**, emails, phone calls, or other ways of communicating with lawmakers, as we **pray** to God. We are *not* supposed to **intercede** for others either, asking lawmakers to give relief to other victims of government. Nor may we, anywhere near any church, reach lawmakers by that one tried and true way to warm a lawmaker's heart: **thanksgivings** – thanking them when they do right.

No-ho, church should have *nothing to do with that!* That's *politics!*

We are only allowed, in church, to reach the goal of verse 2 by prayer to God, prayer to God, prayer to God, and finally, prayer to God. *Literally*, that is the interpretation of several translators and commentators. See the following section, "Translators Against Politics".

Here's the passage through the lens of the popular version:

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, you should pray, pray, pray, and pray for everyone, and 2 for kings, which is the way to get politics to leave you alone in peace. Your church should have nothing to do with actually *reasoning* with politicians. Even *witnessing* to them would be too "controversial" for any church to be associated with it.

But prayer without action is not prayer. This very popular interpretation (that the only communication called for by these verses is with God – they do NOT call us to communicate with politicians) violates James 2:14-17 which mocks the idea of waiting for God to handle our problems without our effort, when there are steps we can take which effectively address such problems.

James 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

James 2:14-17 ridicules the hypocrisy of letting God take care of a problem all by Himself when God has given us the means to take care of at least some of it.

Likewise Matthew 25:14-30 expects us to double our capacity on earth – to keep growing, becoming able to do things which had been, or at least had *seemed*, impossible.

The common interpretation defies our experience.

It is everyday American experience, that communicating with our elected

representatives is the only known way to reach the goal of reducing harassment from the government through Laws from Hell. Not only is it the experience of centuries, but it is the method Paul used, giving us an example to follow. Paul said it was spreading the Gospel.

Philippians 1:12 I want you to know, my friends, that the things that have happened to me have really helped the progress of the gospel. 13 As a result, the whole palace guard and all the others here know that I am in prison because I am a servant of Christ. 14 And my being in prison has given most of the believers more confidence in the Lord, so that they grow bolder all the time to preach the message fearlessly. (GNB)

Paul told us to do it, and led by example, when that was far from safe. Which should shame cowards today who shrink from this duty even in the majority of nations today, in which it is very safe.

In fact, “petitions”, the first category on Paul’s list in 1 Timothy 2:1, is “guaranteed” to be safe from lawful prosecution by our U.S. Constitution. Our First Amendment protects “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances [correction of laws and policies that cause citizens grief].”

Where do you think the framers of that First Amendment got such an idea? Not from Islam! Not from Communism! Not from Relativism!

Proverbs 22:13 (TPT) A slacker always has an excuse for not working—like “I can’t go to work. There’s a lion outside!”

The notion that we should pray for God to take care of our political problems, while our churches have nothing to do with utilizing the means which government itself has provided us to change government, makes as much sense as praying to God to feed us, but thinking it would be wrong to actually lift our forks to our mouths to participate with God in the project.

Proverbs 19:24 (ERV) Some people are too lazy to take care of themselves. They will not even lift the food from their plate to their mouth.

It makes as much sense as praying for God to witness to our neighbors and family members so that we don’t have to.

“Noninvolvement” theologies deny God’s Examples of Faith. Hebrews 11 lists God’s Heroes of Faith. Every one of them got in the Bible by being a political leader, or interacting with a political leader. The chapter calls them our examples. Examples of great faith.

To imagine it improper for churches to organize interaction with elected leaders rejects God’s judgment that such interaction is a Godly example for us to

follow.

Lobbying government – that’s what we call it today – is what every Bible hero did in Hebrews 11, who wasn’t himself a political leader. And the result of their “lobbying” was better conditions for God’s people, although the prophets who did the interceding were often persecuted themselves, having risked all for the welfare of others.

(<http://saltshaker.us/Salt/GodsPoliticalHeroes.pdf>)

The section below, “Greek Word Study: Four Words in 1 Tim 2:1”, examines what Bible commentators and Greek lexicons say about the four words. It shows that three of the four categories of communication listed in 1 Timothy 2:1 are very properly interpreted as communications with political leaders, according to the definitions of the words themselves. (As logically required by James 2:14-17, by the examples of Faith in Hebrews 11, and by everyday experience that lobbying elected leaders is the way to reach the goal of getting government to let us live in peace.)

The section after that, “Translators Against Politics”, shows that despite the consensus about what the words mean among lexicons and commentators, translators and commentators universally read no communication with humans in the verses.

That evidence supports this translation:

1 Timothy 2:1-2 It is very important for churches to organize petitions (to government), prayers (to God), intercession (with government on behalf of others), and thanks (to God and government) concerning citizens, and concerning government, with the goal of peace and quiet as we live for God, serving each other.

Even if prayer to God is all the passage calls for, it is impossible to even pray to God for anything of which we have no knowledge. We have to have at least enough knowledge of what we are asking of God to be able to tell when our prayer is answered.

The prayer goal of 1 Timothy 2:2 is for government to leave law-abiding citizens alone. Most citizens of America today have so little understanding of our government that they can discern neither danger nor progress.

Therefore prayer for government cannot be serious without a lot more civics education than many church members have.

Lobbying Planning. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 establishes not just the authority, but the power, to heal laws. Matthew 25:31-46 calls us to “visit those in prison”. But if we can change laws, then we can get innocent people *out* of prison, not just visit them. We have the power to help *all* who are imprisoned, not just behind bars, but restrained from *any* of their rights.

We are called to “bear one another’s burdens”.

Not just by expressing good wishes, James 2:16, but by truly helping the

truly helpless.

Not stopping with no-risk, low cost partial food assistance, but for example helping parents get their children back from mistaken child abuse investigators, or to get their souls back from anti-God public school evolution, psychotherapy, sex techniques, and free rides to abortionists.

Not just through short announcements in the church bulletin, but through organizing lobbying efforts, and discussing who knows who, to help get Light into Darkness.

Verse 6, below, lists examples of government-involved oppression from which we are called to deliver our neighbors. Verse 7 gives examples of ways we, personally, at our own cost, are called to help those truly in need. Verses 8-9 promise/warn us that the energy with which we deliver others is the energy with which God will deliver *us*.

Isaiah 58:2 They look for me every day and want to know my ways. They act as if they were a nation that has done what is right and as if they haven't disregarded God's judgment on them. They ask me for just decrees. They want God to be near them....

6 This is the kind of [worship] I have chosen: Loosen the chains of wickedness, untie the straps of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke. 7 Share your food with the hungry, take the poor and homeless into your house, and cover them with clothes when you see them naked. Don't refuse to help your relatives. 8 Then your light will break through like the dawn, and you will heal quickly. Your righteousness will go ahead of you, and the glory of the LORD will guard you from behind. 9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer. You will cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am!"

Unfortunately, no translation of verse 1, modern or ancient, calls for communication with government. Nor do most Bible commentators think verse 1 wants Christians to be lobbyists.

So how dare I disagree? Upon what evidence do I insist everyone is wrong but me? Well,

(1) The one Bible commentator on my computer which goes into the most detail about the meanings of the Greek words agrees that at least *one* of the four kinds of communication in verse 1 "may be addressed to men".

(2) Centuries of experience confirm the effectiveness of confronting government, as the way to reform tyranny.

(3) James 2:16 mocks waiting for God to do for us what we should do. Matthew 25:24-30 warns of Hell for those who expect God will solve everything for us while we watch TV.

(4) No Bible hero – nor any of them listed in Hebrews 11 – got in the Bible by

communicating only with God about government tyranny, instead of communicating with political leaders. Paul, the author of 1 Timothy, lobbied Rome and said that was spreading the Gospel.

(5) Greek lexicons show that although all four words are used in New Testament contexts where communication is with God, three of the four words are also used in contexts where communication is with men, and even with politicians.

Greek Word Study: Four Words in 1 Tim 2:1

The four Greek words, alongside how they are translated, are:

δεησεις [supplications/petitions] to God or human authority
προσευχας [prayer] to God
εντευξεις [intercessions/requests] to God or human authority
ευχαριστιας [giving of thanks] to God or human authority

The Greek lexicons quoted below don't specify that the people to whom petitions, intercessions, and appreciation are addressed must be "authorities", but obviously a "petition" is only rationally addressed to someone with the authority to grant it. If we "intercede" for others, that means we approach people with the authority to help those for whom we intercede, and appeal to such authorities on their behalf.

δεησεις/supplications can mean "to anyone"

Vincent's Word Studies: Προσευχη *prayer* [the second of the four Greek words] is limited to prayer to God, while δεησις [the first Greek word of the four, translated "intercessions"] **may be addressed to men.**

The **Abbot-Smith Greek Lexicon:** δ. [δεησεις/sup-plications] **is used as well of requests from man to man**, while π. [προσευχας [prayer] is limited to prayer to God.

TDNT: A Different View. The following dictionary, abbreviated TDNT, disagrees with the preceeding Vincent's Word Studies and Abbot-Smith Greek Lexicon. Vincent's and Abbot said the noun form of the word, δεησις, can be addressed to men. Vincent's said it specifically about its appearance in 1 Timothy 2:1. But TDNT said the noun is used in "the New Testament exclusively, for requests to God."

But notice that TDNT acknowledges that in the Septuigint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), the word sometimes means requests to men, and that is its "common" meaning in other Greek literature. Here is the TDNT article:

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: ...In the form δέομαι σου [*the verb form of the word*] at the beginning of direct speech it may sometimes mean no more than "please," as when Paul asks the chiliarch for permission to address the people (Ac. 21:39) or the eunuch asks Philip to explain the passage

in Isaiah (Ac. 8:34)....

The word has a fuller sense in the case of requests to Jesus, whether to be spared, like the demon in the man at Gerasa (Lk. 8:28), or for help and healing (Lk. 5:12; 9:38). Cf. also the moving appeal which, on the basis of his apostolic commission and out of concern for the welfare of his missionary communities, Paul can also use with his earnest admonitions: δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ ... (2 C. 5:20; v. also 10:2; Gl. 4:12). ...the LXX [Septuigint translation of the Old Testament into Greek] also uses δεῖσθαι of requests to men: ἐάν σου δέηται ὁ ἐχθρὸς...

The LXX [Septuigint] **uses δέησις** [*the noun form of the word, which is written in 1 Timothy 2:1*] **predominantly, and the NT exclusively, for requests to God.** Since the word is common in secular Gk. for requests, it is easy to give it this special sense.... [Greeven, H. (1964–). [δέομαι, δέησις, προσδέομαι](#). G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), (electronic ed., Vol. 2, pp. 40–41). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]\

So which authority is correct?

TDNT's conclusion that δέησις is addressed only to God in the New Testament is based on the *assumption* that it means that in 1 Timothy 2:1.

But the context certainly does not *require* that assumption. I have given reasons why the goal of verse 2 logically requires that some of the communications of verse 1 be to political leaders, and “requests” are the essence of citizen communications with government. The context therefore virtually rules out defining the four words as communication with God only, where definition options include communication with men.

Notice again that TDNT acknowledges that in the Septuagint, the noun sometimes means requests to men, and that is its “common” meaning in other Greek literature. All three authorities thus acknowledge that the noun does have this meaning, depending on context.

Here are the verses listed in the TDNT article which describe communication with men, using the *verb* form of the word, which is usually δεομαι:

2 Corinthians 5:20 We “sincerely ask [δεησεis/δεομεθα] you to make peace with God.” (CEV) (Believers at Corinth)

2 Corinthians 10:20 “But I beseech [δεησεis/δεομαι] you....” (Believers at Corinth)

Galatians 4:12 “Brethren, I beseech [δεησεis/δεομαι] you, be as I am;” (Believers at Galatia)

Acts 21:39 “I beseech [δεησεis/δεομαι] thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.” (A Centurion)

Acts 26:3 “I beseech [δεησεis/δεομαι] thee to hear me patiently.” (King Agrippa)

Acts 8:34 “...the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray [δεησεis/δεομαι] thee,....” (An Ethiopian addresses an apostle)

Luke 8:28 “I beseech [δεησεis/δεομαι] thee, torment me not.” (The possessed man addressed Jesus)

Luke 5:12 “a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and

besought [δεησεις/εδεηθη] him...” (A leper addressed Jesus)

Luke 9:38 “Master, I beseech [δεησεις/δεομαι] thee, look upon my son...” (A mother addresses Jesus, with no indication she knows she is addressing God.)

ΕΝΤΕΥΞΙΣ/Intercessions

The third of the four categories of communication in 1 Timothy 2:1 also commonly describes interceding on behalf of others with humans – especially with political leaders.

In fact, this word *exclusively* means interceding with humans, according to three of the four Greek lexicons below! How did the common interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:1, that it is about communication with God only and never with men, survive these definitions?

The fourth dictionary, *TDNT*, leaves intercession with human leaders the primary meaning, but says it “could” also mean intercession with God.

The fifth authority, *Vincent’s Word Studies*, talks about the meaning of “intercession” as modeled by Jesus. It shows how the meaning of the word matches what Jesus actually did for us, and what the Holy Spirit also does as it intercedes for us: they “throw themselves into our case”. Jesus didn’t just pray for us from His nice safe throne up in Heaven. He came down close enough to be vulnerable.

After that is a short excerpt from an American law journal, showing the precedent for such intimate intercession in Roman law that Paul surely knew about. Although the practice had ceased by Paul’s time, it was surely remembered by Roman citizens.

When Romans sued each other in civil court, attorneys didn’t just *represent* their clients – they *stood in* for their clients to the extent that the court judgments were not officially against their clients but against them! (The system worked only through separate agreements between attorneys and clients that if the attorney won, he would pass the court award on to their clients, and if the attorney lost, the client would reimburse him.)

Louw-Nida: 33.347 ἐντυγχάνω^b; ἐντευξις, εως *f*: to speak to someone on behalf of someone else—‘to intercede, intercession.’ [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 427). New York: United Bible Societies.]

The Abbot-Smith Greek Lexicon: ...ἐντευξις, [intercessions] in the papyri, is the regular word for petition to a superior

Dodson Dictionary, G1783 ἐντευξις, Definition: (**literally: approaching the king**, hence a technical term), a petition, prayer, intercession.

The Abbot-Smith Greek Lexicon: 1. a lighting upon, meeting with. 2. conversation. 3. a petition ...SYNONYM: δέησις

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Official petitions are commonly called ἐντευξις. Decision concerning the desires expressed was usually in practice a matter for officials but the address was to the king

himself.

One who thought the way to the exalted invisible power above visible rulers was no less open could also call a concern addressed to this power ἔντευξις,...2. In 2 Macc. 4:8 ἔντευξις means “conversation”; in Jos. Ant., 15, 79 the ἐντεῦξαις are the claims of Cleopatra to Judaea. [Bauernfeind, O. τυγχάνω, ἐντυγχάνω, ὑπερεντυγχάνω, ἔντευξις (1964—). . G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 8, p. 244). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

Vincent's Word Studies: Intercessions (εὐντεῦξαις) [This Greek *noun* is written only twice in the New Testament:] Only here [in 1 Timothy 2:1] and in 1Ti 4:5. [In the Septuigint, it is written in] 2 Macc. 4:8.

The *verb* ἐντυγχάνειν is commonly rendered to *make intercession*, Rom 8:27, Rom 8:34; Rom 11:2; and ὑπερεντυγχάνειν to *intercede in behalf of*, Rom 8:26. The verb signifies to *fall in with a person; to draw near so as to converse familiarly*.

Hence, ἐντευξις is not properly *intercession* in the accepted sense of that term, [which is that of a lawyer who represents you in a modern criminal court, who has nothing to lose if you are convicted] but rather approach to God in free and familiar prayer. Ἐντυγχάνειν in the passages cited is not to *make intercession*, but to *intervene, interfere*. Thus in Rom 8:26, it is not that the Spirit pleads in our behalf, but that he throws himself into our case; takes part in it. So Heb 7:25: not that Jesus is ever interceding for us, but that he is eternally meeting us at every point, and intervening in all our affairs for our benefit. In ἐντεῦξαις here the idea of interposition is prominent: making prayers a factor in relations with secular rulers.

“Throws himself into our case; takes part in it” doesn’t specify more than any lawyer does who tries hard to win for his client. But there was a precedent Paul surely knew about for “intercessors” who had a much stronger personal stake in their client’s outcome than any modern lawyer.

Surely it is this degree of involvement the Bible has in mind when it uses the word in Hebrews 7:25 to describe what Jesus does for us, and in 1 Timothy 2:1 to describe how we should “intercede” for others. The Notre Dame Law Review, in 1954, describes that legal precedent in Roman law:

Early Roman Law lacked the modern conception of agency (one person [lawyer] representing another [defendant or plaintiff] as his “agent”); and since it was held that what the agent did could not be regarded as having been done by the principal, [the Defendant or Plaintiff who hired the lawyer] a curious situation arose. It was held that what the agent did, he did not for the principal (whom he represented) but for himself. Hence the agent had to agree by special contract that the benefits of what he did should inure to his principal. [that is, that if he won a lot of money, he would forward it to his client.] The principal, on the other hand, had to enter into a special contract to reimburse the agent for all losses and expenditures incurred by him while working for the principal,

provided, the agent acted in good faith. As a result of this peculiar situation, the judgment was always in favor of one attorney and against the other attorney. But, as has been stated, there was a contractual and actionable [enforceable] duty on the part of the lawyer-agent to account for and transfer to his principal whatever obligation on the part of the principal to indemnify the agent in case of an adverse decision. This had to be done by a special proceeding however. [Not until the first half of the first century BC did] the law provide for the automatic transfer of the judgment to or against the real parties to the litigation.

(<https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3632&context=ndlr>)

Not only was there much risk for Roman intercessors at that time, if they were not careful with their contracts or if death or robbery interrupted getting repaid when the case was lost, but Roman law placed a very low ceiling on how much clients were allowed to pay their intercessors. How like that is with Jesus, who has *nothing* to gain by loving us, except for love itself.

ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΑΣ (Giving of Thanks)

This fourth term of 1 Timothy 2:1 means thanking humans, when the context supports that meaning.

Theological dictionary of the New Testament: The verb εὐχαριστέω means “to show someone a favour”...Recipients [of thanks] are gods...and men.... The noun εὐχαριστία is common in inscriptions, especially decrees of honour, and it can mean “gratitude.” [Conzelmann, H., & Zimmerli, W. (1964–). χαίρω, χαρά, συγχαίρω, χάρις, χαρίζομαι, χαριτόω, ἀχάριστος, χάρισμα, εὐχαριστέω, εὐχαριστία, εὐχάριστος. G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), Theological dictionary of the New Testament (electronic ed., Vol. 9, p. 407). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

Little can make a politician more sympathetic to your cause, than to thank him when he does well. Even ruthless dictators respond well to gratitude. Acts 12:22-23. This Bible tip may be the most neglected great political advice. It is how Paul began his defense in court before King Agrippa.

Acts 26:2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

The Greek words for “make”, “all men”, “for”

ποιεσθαι “**make**” **organize**. Most translations render this Greek word “made” or “make”; petitions, prayers, intercession, and recognition should be “made”.

But how does a church “make” prayer, etc.? We don’t talk about “making” prayers. When a church decides that everyone is going to schedule some sort of prayer event together, we talk about “organizing” our event. Likewise if we decide

to communicate with lawmakers, we “organize” our responses to them; we don’t describe that as “making” responses.

So translating ποιεισθαι as “organize” will better fit the way we talk today.

παντων ανθρωπων “~~all-men~~” voters. (Or “citizens”.)

I have been in many churches which acknowledge their duty in these verses to “pray for our leaders”, but I don’t recall any of them observing that the passage puts equal priority on “organizing” prayer, etc. with regard to “all men”.

It is clear how petitions to *politicians* potentially reduces our own persecution. But do petitions to “all men” have that effect – *or, for that matter, any other effect?* Does this passage call us to communicate with *everyone*?

Actually, logic and experience does affirm that interpretation, for two reasons.

First, when Christians are persecuted in many countries today, the primary persecutors are not government, but neighbors. A taste of neighbor-led pressure has been felt here in the United States with covid-dodging masks. Long after governors have lifted their restrictions, the vast majority of citizens are not only continuing to wear masks themselves, but are keeping people who won’t wear them out of most businesses.

A more important example: the pressure on Christians to not quote the Bible at work, in school, or in political meetings, is mostly not from police or laws, but from popular consensus.

Only our organized, wise, prayer-bathed outreach to the growing population of those who don’t want to hear about or from God can reduce this persecution.

Second, citizens have always had strong influence over even the most tyrannical governments. No dictator can tyrannize except to the extent enough citizens tolerate it, having no vision of any better form of government.

The Biblical evidence of this is that several tyrants in the Bible were restrained from doing all the evil they wanted, because they “feared the people”. That phrase is found in 1 Sam 15:24; Mark 11:32, 12:12; Luke 20:19, 22:2; Acts 5:26. Jeremiah 38 is the pathetic story of King Zedekiah’s fear of his own bureaucracy, to the extent that he would not obey Jeremiah’s advice to save himself, even though he believed Jeremiah.

In today’s American Republic, the power of “the people” to reform their government has official sanction, through voting, and petitioning government. The two rights are even spelled out in the U.S. Constitution.

The most expensive part of politics today is not reaching politicians, but reaching voters. Therefore for all these reasons it is very consistent with common sense and a couple of centuries of American experience to interpret the “all men” in 1 Timothy 2:1 as meaning, especially, “voters”.

ὑπὲρ “for” regarding ὑπὲρ all men, politicians

Every translation says we pray, etc. “for” all men, and for kings. That grammar is at home with prayer only to God “for” people, which everyone but me

believes that is what the passage is about. But it is awkward English grammar to say a lobbyist petitions “for” a lawmaker, which is what *I* say the verse is about.

Does the Greek word support a translation friendlier to my scenario of petitioning humans? Can we translate ὑπέρ as petitions and intercessions “concerning” government, or “with respect to” government? Or “regarding”, or “touching” or “about” government?

Yes; “with respect to” and “concerning” are translation choices suggested by *Strong’s Concordance*, and the rest are how translators have rendered the same word in other verses. Synonyms are *in relation to*, *dealing with*, *a propos*.

Dodson Dictionary: G5228 ὑπέρ Definition: gen: in behalf of.... [The word βασιλεων, kings, and παντων ανθρωπων, all men, are in the Genitive case.]

Strong’s Concordance: Definition: “over”, i.e. (with the genitive case) of place, above, beyond, across, or causal, for the sake of, instead, regarding;

(Strong’s and Abbott-Smith list “concerning” as one way the word is translated in the KJV. The two verses where KJV so translates are: Romans 9:27, “Esaias also crieth concerning Israel,” and 2 Corinthians 8:23 “he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you”.)

Abbott-Smith Lexicon: (Genitive)...4. In more colourless sense = περί...for, **concerning, with regard to:**

Abbot-Smith next lists several verses where ὑπέρ has this meaning. Here is that list, with the word choices for ὑπέρ of several translators:

Romans 9:27 <> **Concerning** <> **About**

[Concerning: AFV, ASV, Bishops, Geneva, KJV, ISV, LSV, Murdock, WEB, Webster, YLT <> About: BBE, CEV, ERV, GNB, GW]

2 Corinthians 1:6 [all translations say “for”]

2 Cor 8:23 <> **Concerning** <> **About**

[Concerning: TPT, Webster <> About: YLT, ERV, BBE, ASV, AFV]

2 Cor 12:8 <> **Concerning** <> **About** <> **Respecting**

[Concerning: ASV, LSV, WEB, YLT <> About: BBE <> Respecting: Murdock]

Philippians 1:7 **On behalf of** <> **About**

[On behalf of: AFV, ASV, KSV, WEB, YLT <> About: ERV, GW, ISV]

2 Thessalonians 2:1 **Concerning** <> **Touching** <> **As to** <> **By** <> **About** <> **In regard to** <> **Regarding**

[Concerning: AFV, GNB, WEB <><> Touching: ASV, <> As to: BBE <> By: Bishops, Geneva, KJV, Webster <> About: GW, <> In regard to: LSV, Murdock, YLT <> Regarding: TPT]

Translators Against Politics

“Prayer Only” Translators & Commentators

Incredibly, the most popular interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:1-2 is the opposite of what you have just read. It is common to read these verses as if they call for no

communication with political leaders at all, but rather they call upon God to handle all our political problems without our involvement *or even understanding* of politics.

For example, 11 modern translations support this idea:

GNB, ISV, NLT, Murdock, TPT, Lamsa, Good News, and CEV say all four communications – petitions, prayer (to God), intercessions, and appreciation – are to be only “to God”! ERV, NIrV and Message leaves out the other 3 communciations!

(GNB) First of all, then, I urge that *petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings* **be offered to God** for all people;

(ISV) First of all, then, I urge you to **offer to God** *petitions, prayers, intercessions, and expressions of thanks* for all people,

(Murdock) I exhort thee, therefore, first of all, that thou **present to God** *supplication, and prayer, and intercession, and thanksgiving*, for all men:

(TPT) Most of all, I'm writing to encourage you to pray with *gratitude to God*. Pray for all men with all forms of *prayers and requests as you intercede* with intense passion.

(NLT) I urge you, first of all, to *pray* for all people. **Ask God** to *help* them; *intercede* on their behalf, and give *thanks* for them.

(CEV) First of all, I ask you to *pray* for everyone. **Ask God** to *help and bless* them all, and **tell God** how *thankful* you are for each of them.

(Lamsa) I BESEECH you, therefore, first of all to offer to God, petitions, prayers, supplications, and thanksgiving for all men,

(Good News) First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people;

(ERV) First of all, I ask that you *pray* for all people. **Ask God** to *bless* them and give them what they need. And give *thanks*.

(NIRV) First, I want all of you to *pray* for everyone. **Ask God** to *bless* them. Give *thanks* for them.

(Message) The first thing I want you to do is *pray*. *Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know*.

There are four *distinct* Greek words describing what we are called to do. It is a perversion of the Greek to reduce the list from four to one.

And yet that is justified by Bible commentator **Albert Barnes**. He says distinguishing between the four is “not essential”.

Barnes: It is not entirely easy to mark the difference in the meaning of the words used here, and it is not essential. They all relate to prayer, and refer only to the different parts of prayer, or to distinct classes of thought and desire which come before the mind in pleading for others.

Not only must we never dismiss three words of the Bible as “nonessential”, especially if they seem to be about prayer, but we must never dismiss what God calls us to do, as what we expect God to do for us without us having to do anything.

Expositor's Bible: The Apostle uses three different words for prayer, the second of which is a general term and covers all kinds of prayer to God and the first a still more general term, **including petitions addressed to man**. Either of the first two would embrace the third, which indicates a bold and earnest approach to the Almighty to implore some great benefit. None of the three words necessarily means intercession in the sense of prayer on behalf of others. This idea comes from the context.

Adam Clarke assumes all four words are categories of prayers:

Clarke: Supplications - *Ἀητήσεις* Prayers for averting evils of every kind. **Prayers** - *Προσευχας* Prayers for obtaining the good things, spiritual and temporal, which ourselves need. **Intercessions** - *Ἐντευξεις* Prayers in behalf of others. **Giving of thanks** - *Εὐχαριστίας* Praises to God, as the parent of all good, for all the blessings which we and others have received.

Matthew Henry: A charge given to Christians to pray for all men in general, and particularly for all in authority. Timothy must take care that this be done. Paul does not send him any prescribed form of prayer, as we have reason to think he would if he had intended that ministers should be tied to that way of praying; but, in general, that they should make *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks*:

David Guzik: Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks: These terms describe the wide categories of our communication with God.

John Gill: though the words may be rendered, "I exhort, that first, the supplications of all be made": and so may regard public prayer, the prayer of the whole church, in distinction from private prayer,

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown: The accumulation of terms implies prayer in its every form and aspect, according to all the relations implied in it.

F. B. Meyer: Three different words are used of prayer, because there are so many ways of approaching God.

Conclusion: In the face of the opposition of everybody important, I conclude that we fulfill the mandate of 1 Timothy 2:1-2 by not only “praying” for our leaders [so that we may lead an honest, godly life without going to jail, v. 2], but by (1) “petitioning” our representatives to base our laws upon the principles of Heaven rather than of Hell, (2) “interceding” for those harmed by our public policies, and (3) “thanking” lawmakers who serve us well (which is a wonderful way to build bridges with leaders).

Following the lesson of James 2:14-17, we must do these things to the extent we can, ourselves, trusting God to guide and enable us, rather than expecting God to do what we could have done so we can do nothing.

· 1 Timothy 2:1-2 states a church's political objective: to get government to leave Christians alone. It gives four strategies for reaching that goal. Prayer to God is the second. The other three involve communication with humans in addition to communication with God.

Since it is common knowledge, along with the teaching of Luke 18:1-7, that the best way to "move the heart of the king" is to communicate with him, we may presume that is what God means for us to do. James 2:15-18 teaches that prayer, without action, is not prayer, and that our desire for God to take care of our neighbors is not a substitute for us taking our own actions to help.

These verses describe "lobbying". They describe "getting involved in politics", though not the way we do it today, where quoting God in support of our positions isn't tolerated even by Christian activists.

1 Timothy 2:2 is a description of what we call *political freedom*, especially *freedom of speech and religion*. Verse 1 makes that a goal not just for ourselves, but for "all men". Verse 4 actually says this Freedom will make it easier for "all men to be saved"! Which is God's will according to verse 3!

Paul made Freedom for Religion an official goal of Christian meetings in 1 Timothy 2:2, and described the kind of prayer-bathed interaction with government that would achieve it, in verse 1.

What if hundreds of Christians showed up to listen to and reason with minor candidates, eliminating the need for expensive advertising? What if churches became the forums described in 1 Corinthians 14, with goals including 1 Timothy 2:2?

Members fulfill the goal of 1 Timothy 2:1-2 to get government to let us live honest, godly lives without going to jail, by "**petitioning**" our representatives to base laws upon the principles of Heaven rather than of Hell, "**interceding**" for others harmed by our public policies, and "**thanking**" lawmakers who serve us well (which is a wonderful way build bridges with leaders). Such activity begins with **prayer**, without which we lack wisdom and direction, but God's list doesn't *end* with prayer as is so widely assumed even by Bible commentators and translators.

Following the lesson of James 2:14-17, members will do these things themselves to the extent they can, trusting God to guide and enable them, rather than expecting God to do what they could have done so they can do nothing.

Lobbying government – that's what we call it today – is what every Bible hero did in Hebrews 11, who wasn't himself a political leader. And the result of their "lobbying" was better conditions for God's people – the goal stated in 1 Timothy 2:2, although the prophets who did the interceding were often persecuted themselves, having risked all for the welfare of others.