

# The Importance of Prepositions

Ken Sheppard

Years ago, I had the pleasure of having Ruth K. Groom as my English teacher at Murphy High School in Mobile, AL. (Side note: she was the mother of Winston Groom, who later authored *Forrest Gump*. Yet another brief brush with celebrity for me.) She left several lasting impressions on me that I've carried through the years. One of them is the importance of the little part of speech called prepositions. In trying to communicate this concept to the bunch of knuckleheads I was a part of, she told us to remember that anything a rabbit can do to a stump is a preposition. A rabbit can be on, around, under, in, upon, after, about, among, at, before, outside, and in a host of other relationships with a stump. A preposition showed the relationship between the two things. That rang my bell then, and it's an idea that has helped me ever since.

I had occasion last week to see an old, tough Marine veteran helped by this concept as we studied John 22. Jesus is talking to his disciples about having peace after his resurrection. And they are hiding behind locked doors in fear at this time! This fellow, "semper fi" to the core, is one of my favorite guys in my current crop. As we discussed the peace that is available through Jesus Christ, I could tell that there was some fuzzy thinking about how we can possess peace with God and at the same time not have peace in our hearts.

The answer lies in the prepositions! Romans 5:1 tell us that because God has justified us by faith, we have *PEACE WITH GOD* through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the substitutionary death of Christ, God isn't mad at us any more! He took out his wrath for our sins on his Son who died in our place. That is the basis for our being in a state of peace *WITH* God. The reason we don't experience the feeling of peace in our lives is our failure to actively trust and believe that God is for us and is working all things for the good and intended purpose of making us more like Him. Philippians 4:6-7 is a key passage detailing this truth. "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the PEACE OF GOD, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" Note the contrast: *PEACE WITH GOD*: a settled, accomplished, objective fact that is completely dependent upon what Jesus did for us on the cross. The *PEACE OF GOD*: the experience of peace in our hearts as we actively trust God and allow him to be God and Lord of our lives. That depends on us! He lays out the conditions there! As we were finishing, I saw the light go on in my old Marine's mind as God let him see this great truth in a better way than he had before. I saw him scrambling around to get a paper and pencil to write it down. Two little prepositions: *with* and *of*. What a great difference. "Semper Fi!"

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