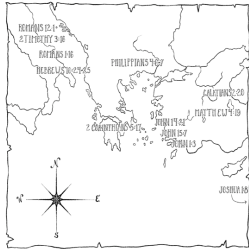


The Way of Wisdom #2

Scripture Memory: II Cor 5:17

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The way
of
Wisdom

Last week Sue preached an introduction to Scripture Memory. She said YES, you CAN memorize; the objective is word perfect; the key is review, review, review. Scripture Memory brings us to the seat at the table of wisdom, not the table of folly. SM will give us a lens through which we see life. The objective this summer is to learn 12 verses together that we will hold onto for a lifetime.

Before we get into our memory verse today, II Cor 5:17, we need to put it into context. The reality of living in this life is that we all understand suffering at some level. Living with people also produces suffering: you all tell me things often that impact me. I am not only a pastor, I also am a person and I can cause you to suffer. Relationships are good but they can cause suffering. As we age, our bodies also suffer. Our broken world is full of suffering.

2 Corinthians 5:17



MEMORIZATION (SCRIPTURE MAPPING)
SUMMER 2026: THE WAY OF WISDOM

Suffering

- Pressure
- Tears
- Pushed to the edge



No where in Scripture do we see that we are to collect daisies, eat chocolate, and skip through the meadows following Jesus. The image of following Jesus is a cross.

Paul is brutally honest in II Corinthians about his pressure, tears, and suffering. Read the whole book, especially the first 4 chapters to learn more about this.

2 Corinthians 1:8

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under **great pressure**, **far beyond our ability to endure**, so that **we despaired of life itself**.



An example of his suffering is in II Cor 1:8.

I've also been in places of great pressure where I don't think I can go on or even want to go on. I want to tap out now. This is a very human experience. Some of you are positive and happy and spin things positively but as you age, we learn we must face these things that are both reality and that have the potential to transform us.

2 Corinthians 2:4

4 For I wrote you out of **great distress** and **anguish of heart** and with **many tears**, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

Suffering impacts the way we love others. Parents understand this: when you see your child suffering or wrestling with life, there is a suffering anguish because we are powerless to help them. Paul knows that the suffering of others becomes so personal that it can produce tears.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.



Finally, Paul says he was pushed to the edge even though God was present.

The memory verse today is really the cornerstone of suffering and despair.

2 Corinthians 5

The Jug and the Footholds

I'd like to talk about this in the context of rock climbing. When you rock climb, there are handholds called jugs and also footholds. II Cor 5 is a rock climbing wall of joy: Paul says there is suffering and shows us how to handle it with handholds and footholds which then propel us to other hand/foot holds.

1. **New Hope** (1-10): Our bodies are weak, but resurrection is coming.
2. **New Center** (11-15): We no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ.
3. **New Sight** (16): We no longer judge people by the old world's categories.
4. **New Creation** (17): In Christ, God's future has entered the present.
5. **New Mission** (18-21): Those who are reconciled become ambassadors of reconciliation.

In the first 10 verses of I Cor 5 we find 5 handholds, which you can see listed here.

Even though he despaired and shed tears, Paul shows us how he handled this hardship: New hope, new center, new sight, new creation, and new mission.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore,
if anyone is in Christ,
the new creation has come:
The old has gone,
the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17

Say this verse outloud. Let's talk about how we can put weight on this in the midst of hardship.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore: 14 For **Christ's love compels** us, because we are **convinced** that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

First, we ask what **THEREFORE** is there for. We go back a few verses to find the answer. The gospel compels us to love and not live for ourselves.

Christ's love compels us.
Christ died and was raised.
We no longer live for ourselves.
We no longer see from the old world.

Location: Not alone

Therefore, if **anyone** is **in Christ**
What is true of Christ is true of you.

This is the most important phrase: What is true of Christ is also true of you.

When I was in college in Phoenix, I had a person in Tucson who fixed my car when I needed it. One time, the man looked at my name and asked if I was related to John Cepin. After a pause, he said my dad had saved his marriage: I was only 21 but I carried my dad's honor. Having been a therapist in Tucson for many years, my dad knows a lot of people here, giving me many more opportunities to carry my parents' honor in my adult life. I was "In John and Patty Cepin." I wasn't fully me in some respects.

Some of you also experience this and may even leave town to escape it. This is what it means at some level to be in Christ: we carry the honor of Christ. Furthermore, Jesus marks us wherever we go. When we walk into hardship or joy, we don't walk into these alone. We don't walk into dark alleys alone, we walk with Jesus. We don't walk into doctor's offices or relationships alone; we are in Christ. Paul understands his location: he is IN CHRIST. Whatever is true about Christ is true about me.

A New World Order

The **new creation** has **come**
Resurrection

What does this mean about me? This is the most important phrase: A new creation has come. We are a new creation, risen from the dead, tasting the product of resurrection with the hope of final resurrection. Jesus has burst into the world and created new creation. We have moved out of darkness into the light.

In the middle of suffering, this is true. I don't just walk into an empty dark alleyway by myself: I walk into a place as a new person where no one has any power to do anything to me literally. They can hurt my body but Paul doesn't despair because he lived a resurrected life of hope. He knew whom he belonged to.

Not the final Word

The old has **gone**
I live for myself.
I am defined by my past.
I must protect myself.
I am trapped by shame.
I am ruled by fear.
I am what I have done.
I am what others have done to me.

The old has gone means I'm not defined by my past. I have regrets and am tempted to let these define who I am. But only Jesus tells me who I am. I no longer need to protect myself from you. I feel vulnerable as a pastor who needs protections from not just you but others as well. But I don't need to protect myself from anyone. Shame wants to dominate all of us: we say stupid things at the wrong time.

Another common thing I see all the time is "I am what others have said done to me." If I am in Christ, He defines me. Those things are gone; the new here. I belong to Christ, in the midst of suffering. I am forgiven and have a new ID and center. I am being made whole and I am learning to live from the resurrection.

Suffering
Through the
Lens of
2 Corinthians 5:17

Pressure is real.
Tears are real.
Perplexity is real.

But in Christ:

Resurrection is coming.
Christ, not self, is our center.
The new is already here.

Let's go back to the Cepin analogy: On Friday, we had neighbors over along with 3 year old Evan Cousineau. If I were to ask Evan what it means to be a Cousineau, he cannot tell you what this means beyond his name. But at 3 years old, he is fully

Cousineau. He will spend the next 20 years trying to figure out what that means. He is a new creation but he is just 3 years old. You are all 3 year olds! You know the facts and will be spending the rest of your lives learning to be made whole. This does not happen at high-end restaurants or on vacation: you can get a taste of heaven but it is when Evan injures himself and suffers, he will learn by seeing how his dad interacts with him in that moment.

The new is here

I belong to Christ.
I am forgiven.
I have a new identity.
I have received a new center.
I am being made whole.
I am learning to live from resurrection.
I am becoming a person of reconciliation.

Understand that this verse, II Cor 5:17, is a foothold for the life you are living. This verse is not saying to ignore your problems, it's announcing that your problems are real and that Christ, not yourself, is the center, and that you have the freedom to live this out in the midst of your hardship.

Let's practice saying II Cor 5:17 from memory.

2 Corinthians 5:17
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