

THE INVADER 2 Corinthians 13:5

INTRODUCTION

There are some things in this universe that just seem too weird to be true. For instance, physicists have now demonstrated that it is possible for two objects, such as two particles or two ions, to be connected in some mysterious way so that even if they are separated in space they will behave as though connected. If you exert force on one causing it to move, the other will move as well, even though in a different place in space. One person stated it this way, "intervening space, regardless of how much of it there is, does not ensure that two objects are separate. So you can have an ion here in San Diego and one in China and if you force the one here to move the one in China will move as well.

This is mysterious to me. I don't understand how that is possible. I don't feel too bad about that because when this idea was first posed theoretically by quantum mechanics Albert Einstein didn't like the idea and called it spooky action at a distance. Yet experiments have verified that it happens. In some ways this makes me feel better because there are some things in the Bible that are also mysterious to me. I don't fully grasp how they could possibly be. Today we will look at one of those ideas. It is the last in our series on being antifragile. It involves how one person might be separated from another yet be influenced by that person. We see this idea in 2 Corinthians 13:5

EXPOSITION

JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU

In a way Jesus Christ is the most antifragile person who ever lived. He used the most difficult circumstances as opportunities to demonstrate his strength. He appeared to be helpless when he was nailed to a cross by the Romans and killed. He was dead. Yet he rose out of his grave and took the throne as the King of Creation. Now that's being antifragile. Even during his life chaotic events like a storm at sea or a near total lack of food for a crowd of thousands of people proved to be opportunities for his power to be manifested. That sounds antifragile to me.

2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves; Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless of course you fail the test?" Jesus Christ, with all his antifragile strength and power and wisdom, actually is in you if you are a believer in Jesus. In John 14:17 Jesus says of the Holy Spirit, "the world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him or knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." Who was with them? It was Jesus. And he said he would be "in you." So he promised that he would somehow live in his followers. Romans 8:9 says if you have faith in Christ the Spirit of Christ is in you. Colossians 1:27 speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory." That's hard to fathom. How can someone live inside of someone else? It sounds a

little bit like the movie *Alien* of years ago where this alien life form took up residence inside the humans on board a spaceship. Is there really some alien life form inside followers of Jesus?

I once heard someone describe a man whose father, now deceased, had been a man of courage, compassion, leadership and integrity by saying, "the spirit of his father lives in him." The qualities that his father displayed were also manifest in him. That is a bit like what Paul was talking about. The same qualities that were evident in Jesus should be produced in the lives of those who know him. But the sense of the Bible is more than that. It says that within you who are believers of Jesus Christ somehow God is able to put the very Spirit of Jesus into you, changing you, encouraging you, directing you, strengthening you, shaping your character, prompting you and motivating you to live as God wants. It is as though Jesus himself actually has taken up residence inside you.

Imagine what a gift this is. Have you ever heard of Sid Meier? He is a legendary video game developer who originated *Civilization*, *Hellicat Ace*, *Colonization* and others. Meier is a devoted Christian, but he is also an unusual person. He has a unique way of seeing the world. One fellow developer called him brilliant. He said you could give him a topic in one weekend he could come up with a game on that theme. He is that creative. He said Meier has an insightful way of looking at the world that he can find fun in almost anything. Brian Reynolds, one of his collaborators, says, "He just thinks differently from us." John Stealy a former partner said, "I gave him a Civil War book for Christmas one year. At New Years he gave it back. I said, 'Sid, didn't you like the book?' He said, 'I've memorized it already.'"

What if somehow Sid Meier's way of seeing the world and ability to think and create were transferred into you? You would be able to do some really cool and creative things, wouldn't you? That's not possible, yet Paul insists something greater than that has happened to you if you are a follower of Jesus. The Spirit of Jesus has been placed into you. That might seem impossible, but Jesus said with God all things are possible. Nothing is impossible with God. Nevertheless this is one of those concepts we might accept by faith yet struggle believing in our everyday lives. It sometimes or maybe most of the time, doesn't seem like Jesus is in us.

Revelation 1:1 introduces the book of Revelation by saying, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John." The book gives glimpses of Christ's glory and might. In 1:17-18 speaking of Jesus John said, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.'" Though John was one of Jesus' best friend when he saw him in his glory he was scared out of his wits. Jesus is not just a really nice guy nor is he the "Man Upstairs." He is the almighty Lord of all. He calmed a storm at sea, walked on water, changed water into wine, raised Lazarus from his tomb, and conquered his own death, never to die again.

He is infinitely wise and infinitely kind and full of grace. As awesome as he is, he was the person that the worst, most despised, most unacceptable people in his culture flocked to because in him they found grace and acceptance and hope.

This is the person who lives inside you, follower of Jesus. This can be hard to truly accept. So we have to ask are we going to believe what God says is true? If we choose that, then we must accept that somehow, this majestic Jesus lives even in us. Paul earlier in this book admitted this is astounding, which is why he said we have this treasure in jars of clay. The most extraordinary individual in all that exists, lives in ordinary jars like us.

Let's assume that this indeed is true. What would having Jesus living in us look like? Obviously we aren't going to have omnipotent power like he does, so what will it be like?

JESUS WILL PRODUCE SOME EFFECTS

Life

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is John 7:38-39. It says that Jesus at one point during the Feast of Tabernacles stood up and announced, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." John went on to comment, "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive." Water is life giving. Go where there is no water and you see barrenness, lifelessness. Wherever there is water life flourishes. Jesus said having his Spirit inside of us will produce a stream of water that produces life. It will flow continually. It will not be dependent on our circumstances. No matter what our personal environment that stream of living water will flow. In John 10:10 Jesus said something similar. He said that he came that we might have life to the fullest. In John 1:4 John said of Jesus, "in him was life." Over and over in the New Testament we get this message that one evidence of the presence of Jesus in us is life.

But aren't we already alive? It would be silly if I said to you when your vision is fine, "I'm going to give you the ability to see." You already have sight. But we understand what this means, don't we? We know that for most of us life isn't what it ought to be. We have all heard someone say to someone else "you need to get a life." We recognize that it is possible to exist without really living. What is the difference between living as Jesus referred to it and merely existing? We might have trouble defining that, but we know it when we see it. What do you think would be true of someone who is really alive? First that person would have a real purpose in life. There would be significance to it. That person would sense that even in the mundane things of life there was meaning that infused every moment. The person would not be totally invested in and absorbed by that which is ultimately trivial.

Then another thing I would look for would be a sense of being alive in the moment. That person would not always be distracted, looking backward caught up in the past or looking

forward to some day in the future. That person would be totally engaged in the moment. A big element of that life would be passion and enthusiasm. This would not be someone just going through the motions, but someone whose passion can almost be felt. It is almost contagious.

I have been blessed to live my adult life with a wife who is full of life. She just is free and alive. I see it in so many ways, and one of them is that she is constantly doing quirky things because she doesn't fret about what it will look like. This makes her very free. One morning I had brushed my teeth and was getting ready for the day. Laurie was doing the same. I heard her doing something that made me laugh. She was sort of singing, "beep, beep, beep." I knew instantly what she was doing. There had been a truck out in front of our house backing up a little earlier. She was just singing the truck backing up beep. She just does random stuff like that all the time. She supplies a soundtrack for her life. She will sing a little bit of a song as she is doing something to provide some more drama to the scene. She's just fun to be around because she is just alive, interacting with life all the time. It's not just the quirky things she does. It is that she is just fully present all the time, fully engaged, always thinking of how she can bless other people. She is alive, and you sense it when with her. We saw it last night. We went to the Oregon State game against San Diego State and afterward we went to Chick Fil A. The very nice lady who took our order and was getting our lemonade asked Laurie if she liked sweet tea. She did, so the lady handed a gallon jug of their sweet tea. For free. Stuff like that just happens with her. I never know what its going to be next. One of the most life-affirming things about her is that she continually looks for evidence of God's grace in the lives of other people. She is anxious to share with people the positive things she sees in them. She continually does that with me, and not only does it show life, it nurtures it!

Desire to obey God

One of the things that is clear about Jesus is that he was totally committed to the will of his Father. He refused to be distracted from doing the Father's will in order to pursue power or ease for himself. He was willing to suffer through hardship, misery, opposition, rejection and ultimately death itself in pursuit of the Father's will.

In John 17:4 as Jesus prayed to his Father the night before he died he said, "I have brought you glory on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do." That was his whole aim in life. It was to bring glory to the Father by doing whatever the Father asked him to do. In John 4:34 Jesus had just had a conversation with a Samaritan woman of questionable virtue that changed her life. This happened while his disciples were off buying food. When they got back they offered him some food and he said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." This confused the disciples who said, "Really? Where did you get it? Is there a burger place around here that we missed?" He said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." The thing that sustained his life was doing the will of the father. That is what energized him. He proved when he went out into the wilderness that he

could literally go weeks without physical food, but he could not go a second without doing the will of his Father. As long as the Father was glorified, Jesus was happy.

This at first glance feels condemning to me. I'm a lot more like the disciples of Jesus in that story in John 4. While Jesus said his food was doing the will of his Father they were preoccupied with getting burgers at the local In-N-Out. Hey, Rick, what would be a way to celebrate your birthday? I'd like to go out and have a nice, big, juicy helping of the Father's will. I wish. Who among us would say that Jesus' passion for obeying his Father is also manifestly evident in us? Probably none of us. In fact, most of us carry around some guilt because we feel like we ought to be more passionate for obeying God than we are.

But we must remember that Paul didn't write that Jesus has totally taken over our lives. One of the classic old science fiction movies that I recall seeing as a boy was *Invaders From Mars*. It was remade almost 30 years ago. The original, if you saw it now, would seem like the very definition of hokey. Even as a kid I remember it being a tense, scary movie until they actually showed the aliens, who clearly were people in pretty dumb Martian suits with a zipper up the back. Nevertheless, the movie had a creepy theme. In the original a boy named David MacLean sees a spacecraft land in a sand pit behind his house during a fierce storm. He tells his dad who goes to investigate, but the dad returns saying all is normal. But he is not normal. He is emotionless, distant, different. One by one people David knows undergo this same transformation. Eventually he discovers that Martian invaders have captured them and implanted a mind control crystal inside their brains. It has taken away their personality and all emotion. That theme has recurred in a lot of different movies in the decades since. Paul did not say that's what happens to those who believe in Jesus. This verse does not say that any trace of who you are will disappear.

What Paul said was that Jesus would be in you. Rather than a mind control crystal it would be more like Jesus has a communication device inside your head. He can instruct you and encourage you, tell you what you should be doing. Only it's a little stronger than that because he also creates a desire to do that which we are hearing and if we will look to him give us the strength to do it.

Clearly we do not have the same level of desire to love as Jesus loved, to serve the Father as Jesus served, to be as good and holy as Jesus was. ***But if you are a believer in Jesus you do have those desires to love unconditionally like Jesus did, to serve the Father without limit like Jesus did, to be as good and holy as he was.*** You wouldn't be here today if you didn't have that. We get distracted, we get confused, we fail to listen to his voice, but if you are a follower of Jesus it is there. No matter how you sometimes mess up, inside you want to do the Father's will.

That's part of why we at times feel guilty. We see the dissonance between what we really want and what we actually do. If you did not have that desire inside you there would be no

guilt, no sense of dissonance at all. Recently in a conversation somehow the topic of bungee jumping came up. I don't ever see a You Tube of someone bungee jumping or see it on television and feel a twinge of guilt. I never think, "I really ought to try that at least. I feel bad that I'm not doing it. I know I should be." I have no desire, no interest in that at all. If someone somehow was trying to force me to do it I would offer to pay ridiculous sums of money to avoid it. The spirit of a bungee jumper does not live inside me. The Spirit of Jesus does though. When I hear stories of someone who blows me away with their commitment and sacrifice to do the will of God I inevitably think, "I ought to be more like that." Why is that? Because Jesus, whose food was to do the will of the Father, lives inside me. His desire to do the will of the Father is in me, even if I follow it imperfectly.

Humility

In Matthew 11:29 Jesus said, "I am gentle and humble in heart." Boy was that the truth. Can you find any place in the Bible where Jesus said, "Hey, do you know who you're talking to? Don't you know who I am?" He had every right to take umbrage at the way people treated him and some of what they said to him. But he never did. He always treated the lowest outcast people in his society with gentleness and respect.

The human condition is that we are so very conscious of ourselves all the time. This week the group that went through the marriage course last fall got together and went bowling. It has probably been 15 years or more since the last time I bowled. I don't care about bowling at all. I have no desire to be a great bowler and don't care if I'm not very good at it. But I encountered an all too familiar feeling that night. One of my first balls went into the gutter and the thought popped into my mind, "Oh no, I don't want to embarrass myself. I don't want my wife to have to admit to people that her husband is so uncoordinated that it will be a big win if he just doesn't hurt himself and if he knocks down any pins at all." How do we lose that self obsession, which is the very opposite of the humility of Jesus? If Jesus lives through us we are going to see his humility, a humility which causes us to lose that preoccupation with self, appearing in us.

Jesus is the center of all life. He is the Lord of all worthy of total obedience and reverence. Yet according to Philippians 2:5-8 he took on the form of a servant. He humbled himself to the point of death. In John 13 he lived that out by performing the most humiliating and menial of tasks when he washed his own disciples' feet. Imagine that you are a powerful lawyer for a corporation and the CEO calls you in and tells you he has a new role he wants you to play in the company. It will be important for everyone if you do this. Then he tells you he would like you to become the new janitor. That would be a lot easier to take than the step Jesus took down. He was only able to do it because he was not obsessed with himself. This same humility caused him to be gentle with deeply flawed and fallen people. If Jesus is in you he will produce that same humility and gentleness with others.

Having the Spirit of Jesus in us will start the process of freeing us from this need to look good, to impress, to prove ourselves. He will set us from self and make us free to think about carrying out our desire to do God's will and bring his grace to other people. So almost as soon as that thought came that I don't want to embarrass myself Jesus spoke up in my head and said "I love you even if you fall down on the lane and break your wrist. Even if you drop the ball on your toe. Even if you throw 20 straight gutter balls. Does it matter what anyone else thinks?" No it doesn't. So I could forget me. By the way, that freed me up so I didn't throw another gutter ball.

An arrogant or proud follower of Jesus is an oxymoron. It is an utter contradiction in terms. A person who is harsh and critical of other people is not displaying that Jesus is in him, for Jesus is humble and gentle with people. That person betrays a belief that he or she really isn't much in need of God's grace.

Confidence

At the end of John 13 the apostle tells us that the night before Jesus was arrested despite the disciples' insistence that they would be faithful to the end, especially Peter, Jesus told them that they in fact would abandon him and Peter would deny him three times. But then in chapter 14:1-3 he said, "Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." Jesus knew what awaited him the next day. He knew he was going to suffer an excruciating and terrifying death. Yet he was calm. More to the point he was confident. He told the disciples not to freak out about their coming failure and assured them that he would come back for them. He had hope that the Father would make it happen.

That same night in John 16:22 he said, "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." Again Jesus both exhibits and gives great hope in the Father and in the future the Father would bring about. In Matthew 26:63 Jesus is on trial. After a lot of phony witnesses had been paraded through the high priest finally asks Jesus if he is the Christ, the Son of God. In verse 64 Jesus says, "Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you: in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Jesus had hope, total confidence despite what was about to happen to him.

If Jesus is in us, this is also going to be characteristic of us. In Romans 15:13 Paul wrote, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." He is the God of hope. If we have the Spirit of Jesus in us we will overflow with hope, no matter what we face. Colossians 1:16 says that all things were created by Jesus and for him. Then verse 17 says, "He is before all things and in him all things hold together." It is his power that holds all of creation together.

There are going to be difficult things we all face in life, but what a difference it should make to know that in whatever threatens us the person who created all that exists and sustains it is living inside of us. Talk about confidence!

Gratitude

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul instructed believers to be filled with the Spirit of Jesus who lived in them. Then he described what that will be like. In verse 20 he says, "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." If you have the Spirit of Jesus in you giving you life, eternal life, giving you hope, one of the inevitable results will be that you will be a grateful person. You will see God's hand at work in your life in everything and you will want to give thanks. You have been given more than you could ever measure, so your reaction will naturally be to be thankful to God.

In his book, *Authentic Power* (p. 221), John Avant tells the story of walking into the airport in Atlanta lugging three big bags. A woman named Wolina who is an employee of Delta Airlines, saw him and offered to help. She said, "Here, let me carry one of those bags for you." Avant has never had an airline employee go out of his or her way to help him like that. So he told her. He thanked her as she carried his bag to the counter and said, "I've never had anyone carry my bag like that before. That was really nice of you." Wolina patted his arm and said, "When God has been as good to me as he has I just have to pass on his love to others." Avant was so impressed he not only thanked her but gave her another book he had written. She openly rejoiced when he did so to the point that other people around them were looking on curiously. Another Delta employee said to Avant, "She's always like this. She is so kind to everyone that they always want to know why and she always tells them about Jesus."

There is just going to be a sense of continual gratitude about a person who has been forgiven, loved, granted eternal life and had the Spirit of Jesus in him or her. It will be one of the most noticeable things about this person because even on his or her worst day, and we will all have some days that are our worst, we will have immeasurable reason to be thankful.

APPLICATION

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE JESUS

Paul told the Corinthians to "examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith." I almost hate to talk about this verse because it can magnify a fear that is all too common for Christians. So many of us fear that maybe it didn't work for me. Maybe I wasn't sincere enough. Maybe I'm not good enough. Maybe I'm just kidding myself. Maybe God is down on me and just won't accept me. When I was in my teen years I asked Jesus into my life several times because I wasn't sure it worked.

Here is what set me free: God does not lie. He keeps his promise. He said to as many as believe in Jesus he gave the right to be children of God. Having Jesus in you is a gift. You just believe what God promised and receive it. It is not about whether you deserve it or are good enough. It is simply about God keeping his promise. You can trust him to do so.

The Corinthians were a mess. They struggled with idolatry and sexual immorality. They got drunk at communion. They constantly quarreled with each other. They were so proud they didn't think Paul was good enough for them. They were suing each other. Nevertheless it is clear that Paul assumes that Jesus Christ was in them.

This is not about earning it. It is about believing God's promise and receiving the gift of forgiveness, eternal life and the Spirit of Jesus living inside you. If you have made that decision you can do so right now by putting your trust in Jesus Christ and inviting him to invade your life and take over. If you have done that Jesus is there whether it feels like it or not.

We all know people who claim to be followers of Jesus but who seem the farthest thing from it. Oddly it seems like those who have the greatest reason to question the reality of their faith are the ones who never do. Those most likely to be concerned about it usually have the least to worry about.

I will ask you a few simple questions: Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for you and rose from the dead? Do you want him to rule in your life? Do you want him to invade your life? Do you most want people to see Jesus in you? Does it sometimes bother you that you don't follow him more diligently than you do? If you answer yes to all those questions then you have passed the test.

LET JESUS RUN THINGS

Perhaps you believe now that Jesus indeed is there, even if you still are a little dubious based on what you see in your own life. Here's the good news. If you believe in Jesus, he's there. And the more the life of Jesus is manifested in you the more hopeful, good, grateful and humble you will be. The more Jesus is manifested in you the more antifragile you will be.

So how do I have more of Jesus' life and less of my garbage happen? Who wouldn't want more of that life if it indeed is a life of gratitude, hope, and Christlikeness? There is no formula, just a couple of key elements to having Jesus come out more in your life. In John 7:37 Jesus said the way we have that stream of living water flow from within us is by believing in him. We have to keep coming to him believing and drinking from him. In other words, the key thing is putting faith in Jesus. Paul said a similar thing in Galatians 2:20 when he said, "the life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God."

Faith, believing God keeps his promises continually is key. Keep coming to Jesus and drinking of him. What that means is that we trust as we saw last week that when we are weak God's power wins the day, so we must trust in him. That means as we go through our days we can continually be asking his power to take over, asking Jesus to strengthen and direct us. We are to trust him to manifest himself through us.

The second element you will see in 2 Corinthians 4:10. There Paul wrote "we always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." I die to living for my own glory, my own security, my own comfort, my own pride, my own righteousness. I put all that to death and let Jesus live out his life for his will, his plan, his glory and that's when we'll see a lot more Jesus and a lot less us. That's when we'll be antifragile.

So how does that look? How might that come out in life? I used to be asked to be a part of ordination boards for the denomination that I once ministered in. That required that I read papers candidates submitted then be part of an oral examination of the candidates. I did that quite a few times in my previous ministry, but of all of those one man stood out. His name was Steve Weik. He was around 40 years old, married and had two kids. He had already involved in ministry for a number of years, but sought ordination to serve in a church. He was a humble, kind man that I found very likeable. He was a man of great character and integrity. But the thing that made him stand out to me was the fact that he had a rare blood disease. It was not leukemia, but it was something akin, and it is always fatal in time. He knew the clock was ticking. He didn't know how long he had to live, but he knew it was only a few years at the most. We asked him how that made him feel. He said that in one way it was exciting for him because he knew he was almost certainly going to see Jesus before any of us. He said it made him sad to think that he wouldn't get to see his kids grow up and wouldn't get to be with this wife, but that was the only sad part of it. We asked him what he wanted to do with his life. He said, "I want Jesus to live through me every day. I want him to use me to the fullest possible extent for his glory whatever that may entail." He was truly antifragile because the thing he was facing would cause many people to be distraught and maybe even depressed and bitter. In him the life of Jesus was coming out. He did not stress about it, he stressed about almost nothing. And most of all his life was *powerful*. Before his example people were humbled and mute. I think Jesus the Invader was real in him and was living through him.