

**Theme:** Faith in Exile – I Peter 1:17-19

**Title:** Dispersed but Not Deserted – I Peter 1:1-2

**Aim:** God knows where we are because he put us there.

**Intro:** I was born in Montgomery, WV & raised in Clifton Forge, VA but I haven't lived in either of those places for 50 years. I can assure you that as I was growing up I would have never imagined living 37 years in Vermont. I certainly know that I'm not a Vermonter – you have to be born here to be considered so. The story goes of a man whose family lived in Vermont for generations but his parents moved to Boston the day before he was born. They quickly realized they didn't like Boston & missed VT, so the day after he was born they moved back. This man lived 99 years, all of it, except for that one day, in Vermont. His obituary read, "Bostonian dies in VT." So, I'm not a Vermonter, but I've lived here longer than anywhere else. I was placed here by God. For that matter, so were you, whether you live in Vernon, Northfield, Hinsdale, Gilford, Greenfield, Gill, Brattleboro, etc. Theme: Faith in exile. As has been said, if we are in Christ, then we are exiles in a world that's not our home. We've seen the message of God thru Jeremiah to the Jewish exiles in Babylon & the examples of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah regarding how to live in exile. Now we'll spend an extended time looking at the epistles of I & II Peter & I John. Today we'll consider just the introduction of I Peter – vs1-2 [READ]. I) Let's identify the author of this epistle. He is "**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.**" This was Simon Peter, one of the 1<sup>st</sup> disciples chosen by Jesus. He had been a fisherman but Jesus called him to be a "fisher of men." Commentator David Gudzik noted that "These Christians would eagerly receive a letter from Peter, who was not only an apostle (who had been w/Jesus) but seen as the leader of the apostles, an important & influential man in the early Church." He was an influencer before that term became widely used as it is today. Gudzik went on to write that "Peter's name is

mentioned more in the gospel than anyone except Jesus. No one spoke as often as Peter, & Jesus spoke more to Peter than any other individual. Jesus rebuked Peter more, & he is the only disciple who dared to rebuke Jesus. He confessed Jesus more boldly & accurately than the other disciples; but also denied Jesus more forcefully & publicly than any other disciple. Jesus praised Peter more than the other disciples but also was the only disciple Jesus addressed as Satan. He received a personal visit from Jesus after His resurrection & also received a personal restoration from Jesus before His ascension.” I would also note that Peter was the only one who walked on water w/Jesus. So Peter was a good one to hear from. II) **He wrote to “exiles of the Dispersion”** We read in Acts 8:1 that after Stephen was martyred for his proclamation of Jesus, ***“there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem.”*** Then in Acts 11:19 we read of ***“those who were scattered because of the persecution.”*** Many were dispersed, fulfilling the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 – ***“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, & you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem & in all Judea & Samaria, & to the end of the earth.”*** Those to whom Peter wrote were in the regions which started “the end of the earth” The gospel was moving outward as the disciples were forced outward. They were exiles, those, according to Strong’s, “who reside as aliens; those from a foreign country, residing by the side of natives; pilgrims.” Commentator William Barclay quoted an early Christian writing entitled “The Epistle to Diognetus” describing pilgrims: “They inhabit the lands of their birth, but are temporary residents of it; they take their share of all the responsibilities as citizens & endure all the disabilities as aliens. Every foreign land is their native land & every native land a foreign land...they pass their days upon earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.” These believers to whom Peter wrote were scattered by persecution but in a greater sense they

were scattered by God, just as Christians today are scattered throughout the whole earth. We're where God wants us to be that we might be influences upon others for Christ's sake. Peter wanted these believers to know that III) **Though they were dispersed, they were not deserted**. These are "elect" exiles, as are we, if we are in Christ. That word elect means chosen – "chosen by God to obtain salvation thru Jesus Christ" (Strong's). Gudzik wrote that "this opening characteristic of the readers of this epistle was meant to strengthen & encourage them in their affliction." They were known by God & belonged to Him, no matter where they lived or what their circumstances. Edward Hiebert wrote that the doctrine of election is a "family truth intended to foster the welfare of believers." God is saying to all His children (you, if you have embraced Christ by faith), "I know you; you are Mine." This election is "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..." It's interesting that the word foreknowledge, in the Grk, is "prognosis" – knowing ahead, forethought, but also pre-arrangement. God knows because He has pre-arranged. Gudzik wrote that it's an aspect of God's omniscience – He knows all things. And yet it's more – we must believe, exercise faith, but that faith is a gift of God, w/out which we would not embrace Christ as Savior. Note also that this election is "in the sanctification of the Spirit" or by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. To sanctify is to set apart for special purpose. Anyone who has come to faith in Christ has be set apart by the Holy Spirit for relationship w/God & for the purpose of communion w/God & being used by God for His kingdom work. Sanctification is both a finished work by the Holy Spirit in that God has set us apart for Himself & a ongoing process that won't be completed until Jesus comes or this life ends for us. The Holy Spirit is working in each of God's children to make us more like Christ, little by little, line upon line, day by day. Peter was saying to these scattered believers & to us exiles, "God hasn't forsaken you. He's given us His

Spirit to work w/in us until Jesus comes.” The Holy Spirit works in us to 2 ends: obedience & purification. “For obedience to Jesus Christ.” The 1<sup>st</sup> obedience He works in us is the obedience of faith, believing & receiving Christ as Savior/Lord. Then it is the obedience born from faith. True, saving faith always leads to obedience. Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). If we say we believe & have no desire to obey, nor put effort into obedience, then we are deceived or lying. True faith surrenders to the Lordship of Christ. Give way to the Holy Spirit working in you for obedience. “And for sprinkling w/His blood.” Sprinkling has to do w/purification. Gudzik pointed out that there were 3 circumstances in the OT when blood was sprinkled on people: 1) the establishment of the Sinai/Old Covenant (Ex.24:5-8), 2) the ordination of Aaron & his sons as priests (Ex.29:21), & 3) the purification ceremony for a cleansed leper (Lev.14:6-7). Then he wrote, “The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on us accomplishes the same things: 1) a covenant is formed (covenant of grace – new covenant in Jesus’ blood), 2) we are ordained as priests to Him (chap2), & 3) we are cleansed from our corruption & sin” (I John 1:7). Peter was saying to his readers then & today: “God has washed you in the blood of Jesus. Tho there is evil around you & even tho you struggle w/the old man yourselves, yet God has made you clean & declares you righteous based on the death of Christ on your behalf & His righteousness imputed to you.” The fact of your exile does not mean that God has deserted you, tho He has dispersed you. He is w/you; He is for you! He is your home away from home. Rest in Him, press into Him. Finally, IV) **Peter pronounced a blessing upon those dispersed by God.** “May grace & peace be multiplied to you. Grace is “the merciful kindness by which God, exerting His holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens & increases them in Christian faith, knowledge & affection, & kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues”

(Strong's). Peace is “the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, & so fearing nothing from God & content w/its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is” (Strong's). We need God's grace & His peace in order to lives as exiles in this world, & He is at the ready to give grace upon grace & speak His peace to our hearts. Peter's prayer was that God's grace & peace would be multiplied to us – ours in the fullest measure. God's reservoir will never run dry! Yes, we are exiles in a world not our home. Yes, we are dispersed throughout the world, but we are not deserted. Trust God, give way to the Spirit, follow Christ. It takes faith – faith in exile.