

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

Title: The Greater One – I John 4:1-6

Aim: Test the spirits & be influenced by the greater One.

Intro: I'm sure you've heard of the "new" phenomenon on the social scene: those called "influencers." Now, generally speaking, an influencer is "one who inspires or guides the actions (& opinions) of others, one w/the ability to influence behavior or opinions." But the new "influencers" are "personalities who share their opinions, expertise & recommendations on any social media channel (TicToc, FB, Instagram, etc.), ones who have the power to influence many people via social media (or even traditional media)." It's "someone (or something) with the power to affect the buying habits or quantifiable actions of others by uploading some form of original—often sponsored—content to social media." Like we need more things/people to influence us. There are a lot of influences/ers in the world already. Have you ever thought about who/what are the influencers in your life? Who/what should influence us? Theme: Faith in Exile. We who are believers/followers of Christ are exiles in this world which is not our home. We're here to influence others for Christ, but beware of the influences out there. John warns us in our text this morning – I John 4:1-6 [READ]. 1) **Do not believe every spirit.** That word spirit (pnema) has several kindred meanings. According to Strong's it is 1) The "vital principle by which the body is animated" (life force). Close to that is 2) "the breath of life" (which at death goes back to God who gave it). I think that would include the idea of life force. W/out breath &/or that life force one cannot live. 3) Can be a "simple essence, higher than man but lower than God" – a spirit being, such as an angel or demon. 4) Which I think best fits the context of this passage of Scripture: "the disposition or influence which fills & governs the mind (or soul) of anyone. That efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire,

etc.” John urges us not to believe every spirit – good advice to those living in a world not their own, w/a myriad of influences plying for our attention & for success in controlling/directing us. As we have mentioned before, John was mostly concerned about the influence of Gnosticism, which taught that the material world was evil & only the immaterial/spiritual world was good. It taught that salvation came through knowledge instead of thru the atoning work of Christ. It denied that Jesus Christ was truly man, God who came in the flesh to identify w/us & take on our sin & its penalty, death.