INTRODUCTION
Last week we celebrated Easter. On Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ which established once and for all the salvation of His people. In other words, we celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ did for us something that was impossible for us to achieve on our own. Our salvation was accomplished for us before we even knew that we needed it.
However, that is not the end of the story. Instead, it is just the beginning. Christianity begins when we who were dead in our sins were brought to life again. But, now that we are alive again we are not called to passively sit on the sidelines. Instead, we are called to an active participation in the work of God’s kingdom. In the verses immediately preceding our text, Paul compares Christianity to a race. You can’t win the race by sitting quietly in the stands. Paul also compares Christianity to a fight, and it is our fight against sin and temptation that Paul lays out for us in this passage.

BENEFITS OF THE COVENANT
In this passage, Paul connects the story and struggles of Israel to those of the Christian Church. He does not divide the two. Paul is talking to Gentile Corinthians, yet he calls the Israelites of old “our fathers”. He then shows the similarities between the signs and benefits of the Old Covenant and those of the New Covenant. Specifically, Paul shows how Israel was baptized when they passed through the sea, and how they too were given spiritual food and drink, similar to the bread and wine of communion.

WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION
Despite all the natural provision, and despite all the benefits that God gave to the people of Israel, most of them never made it to the land of promise. Instead, their bodies were “scattered in the wilderness”. So, what happened to the Israelites that caused them to fall in the wilderness? Paul gives us an abbreviated list of the sins committed by the people of Israel after their deliverance from Egypt, but before they entered the Promised Land. He tells us later in our text that these sins are the kinds of sins that are common to all men. So, as we examine the sins of Israel, Paul wants us to see our sins represented in theirs.

THE FEW
In verses 6 through 10 Paul goes through a long list of sins which Israel fell into, then in verse 11 he tells us that all of these things happened as an example for us. We are supposed to find instruction in these examples. But are the examples we have in Israel only negative examples? In verse 5 Paul tells us that God was not well pleased with “most of them”. That must mean then, that there are some good examples to be found as well. So who were the few who God was pleased with? We find that story in Numbers 13-14.

In Numbers 13 we find the people of Israel poised on the edge of the Promised Land. But before going in, they send spies to scout out the land and bring back a report. 12 spies go in and all of them see the incredible riches of provision that the land contains. However, only 2 of them bring back a positive report. The rest of the spies couldn’t see past the giants in the land. So, despite having experienced God’s miraculous deliverance from Egypt, the people of Israel give up without a fight.
TAKE HEED LEST YE FALL
The people of Israel who walked in the wilderness, who fell into all of these sins which Paul listed, who were right on the edge of the Promised Land but turned away—these were the same people who had witnessed arguably the most miraculous deliverance ever recorded in history. This nation of slaves had front row seats to see their slave masters brought low by one incredible sign after another. They saw their God, the God who made heaven and earth, display His might against the so-called gods of Egypt. These was the same people who watched as an ocean was split in half before their feet so that they might escape an army which had them trapped. These were men and women who had eaten bread given to them from heaven and had drunk water that had gushed out of a desert rock.
If these same people could witness and experience all of this and then turn around and complain that God simply hadn’t done enough for them, if they could forget so quickly what God had done and turn to idols, then certainly we too must take heed lest we fall into the snares of the enemy.

GOD IS FAITHFUL
Paul doesn’t end with this most dire of warnings in verse 12, however. For he immediately turns our eyes off of ourselves and onto our faithful God in verse 13. We see this same pattern in Philippians 2:12-13 where Paul begins with the command to, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”, but then immediately gives the reason why we are to do that. It is because “it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Paul simultaneously warns the Corinthians that they must persevere in their faith and also comforts them with the knowledge that it is God who will preserve them in their faith. Our resistance to temptation and God’s deliverance from temptation are two sides to the same coin. It is only because God provides us a way of escape that we are then able to offer any resistance in times of temptation. Our perseverance is the fruit of God’s preservation.

THE GREAT ESCAPE
In verse 13 we are given an incredible promise. Our faithful God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability. Instead, He will provide us with a way of escape. Yet this way of escape might not be what we expect. When we think of escape, we immediately think of a way out, and in some situations that might be exactly the kind of escape that God provides. However, the way of escape according to our passage is not so much a way out as a way through. The way of escape that God promises will give us the means to bear up under or endure temptation.

God provided the people of Israel a miraculous escape from Egypt. He then provided them with all that they would need to endure the rigors of a wilderness journey. Yet that is not the climax of the story. God has provided us with a way to escape the tomb. If He can do that, then He most certainly can provide us with all that we need to endure the temptations that we will face in our Christian journey.