

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. Third Sunday in Lent.

March 24, 2019.

God has provided Jesus, our ultimate way out. Amen.

Have you ever been to an escape room? I've done a couple. Lots of fun. You get locked in a room with a bunch of people and there's a story and theme like a sinking ship. And there's pictures and scenery and objects and artifacts and numbers and clues to help you find your way out. And if you don't do it in an hour, the ship sinks. You die. There's usually a host whom you can call on, three times max, to help you figure out the next clue to open the next corridor, get the next key so you can keep on working your way out. Pretty fun.

Doesn't life feel like an escape room much of the time, minus the fun? You feel locked and trapped. There's supposed to be a story, but it all just seems one big puzzle. There's trouble and trickery and things you can't figure out and then you die. Sorry to be so negative, but that's how we feel. And maybe you think, "I can call on God if things get real bad, but I better save up my three times, just in case God gets tired of listening to me."

My dear friends, God is so much more than escape room host. He always provides a way out. He provided the way out of our biggest puzzle, our sin, by putting his own Son on a cross to forgive those sins. That Son, Jesus, clearly said, "I am the way. I am the way out of trouble. I am the way to solve the puzzle. The way out of trouble is already there. It's through me. The way to heaven is already open. It's through me." And so the way through every trouble, every temptation, is Jesus. Jesus is the way out. Jesus is our strength in trouble. Jesus is our strength in temptation. Jesus is the one who helps us carry all our troubles. You don't carry any trouble alone. Jesus carries it with you. And think about who is doing more of the heavy lifting. Jesus, the all powerful Son of God, or us, weak and sinful human beings? Yeah, let's have Jesus carry the burden. Let's look to him for the way out.

I know this section refers to a lot of accounts from different parts of the Bible 1500 years before Jesus was on the earth. This chapter in 1 Corinthians just sort of figures that we know these accounts. Maybe you do. Maybe you don't. Either way is ok. I'll do my best to help us fill in the blanks and whether you are hearing about these for the first time or the thousandth time, there are still lessons, warnings, examples for us to take away. First of all, notice God's great love. God's love begins this section and God's great love and faithfulness end this section.

God wants us to know this. He doesn't want us to be ignorant. Our forefathers all were under the cloud. This refers to God providing a pillar of cloud that guided his people for forty years. Every day, God showed all his people exactly where to go, using not just an ordinary cloud, but a miraculous cloud that assured them of his presence. They all passed through the sea. This was a great miracle. God divided the waters of a sea and his precious people passed through safely. Those same waters closed up and destroyed God's enemies. This was the thing God's people pointed to for hundreds of years as the greatest evidence of God's love he had ever shown.

They were all baptized into Moses. What does this mean? I thought we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? Well, baptism hadn't been instituted by Jesus was Moses was alive. So baptized is used in the sense of they followed Moses as their leader. They identified with this man Moses and were obedient to him. Not exactly how we would best phrase our relationship to God in baptism, yet similar. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. This

would have made them think of the literal food and drink God provided out of his love. Every day, for forty years, God literally rained down bread from heaven. In a barren wilderness. For millions of people. God literally sent water from a rock, for millions of people. Plus all their cattle and sheep! That was literal food and drink. And more importantly, God gave spiritual food and spiritual drink in Christ. Christ was their rock. Not just a single stone, but bedrock, a solid and sure foundation of God's love. God had Christ go with them for forty years of wandering in this barren, desolate, remote area, where no one lived then and no one lives today. God's love for them was amazing. And God's was for all. I pray you noticed how often God said, "all." All under the cloud of God's guidance. All passed safely through the sea. All were baptized. All ate the food and drink. All! God showed love to all.

So don't think for a second God was mean or arbitrary when it says, "God was not pleased with most of them." What? I thought God loves all. Why was he not pleased with most? Well, maybe another verse from another part of the Bible will help. Here's the verse: without faith, it is impossible to please God. God was not pleased with those who did not believe. Can you imagine? They all experienced God's love and protection and provision and miracles. God showed love to them all. Yet most did not believe. Their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Maybe it's not so hard to imagine how this could happen. We see these things occurred as examples, for us, to keep us from setting our hearts strongly on evil, to keep our hearts from lusting after evil. These examples, from these people, 3500 years ago, sound like today's trending twitter topics. It was true 3500 years ago for the people of Israel. Trending 2000 years ago for the Christians in the city of Corinth. Still trending today for us!

Idolatry. The people of Israel literally made a calf of gold and bowed down to it. The people of Corinth made statues and worshiped them. That's not us. We have nothing to learn from that! Yeah, we just turn the gold into green paper and worship that, spend all our time pursuing that. We build statues to famous people, in our hearts and follow them, worship them, track every movement about them. How many of you know the history of baseball better than the history of the Bible, could name more players from the Packers hall of fame than Jesus' twelve disciples?

Commit sexual immorality? Yeah, happened in Israel. In plain sight. Corinth was famous for it. Sailors were known to walk three miles up a mountain where over one thousand prostitute priestesses helped people "worship" their "gods." Today you can have that all on your phone, in your pocket. Why walk three miles? 23,000 Israelites died in one day. How many are killing their relationship with Jesus every day?

Don't test the Lord. In spite of this food and drink from heaven, they wanted to see more of God's power before believing in him. Sound like us? In spite of God's love and care all around us, we want instant health, fabulous wealth, all the time happiness or God's not real, at least not the God that I want. Testing God is really just refusing to believe unless God acts on your terms. Grumbling? Do we need examples from the past when there are so many from the present? I have to take out the garbage? Have you really stopped to think how stupid that is? God has given us so much stuff, that we have to carry out the stuff we have thrown away. And we complain about that. We have so many clothes that it's such a burden to wash them and carry them back to expensive boxes where they sit until the next time we wear them for a few hours and then, can you believe it, we have to wash them again. And our closets aren't big enough and our pants aren't big enough, and what's the matter with us? We have more stuff, than anyone, ever. More food than anyone, ever. And we are the saddest, most depressed people, ever.

These things happened as examples for us and were written down as warnings for us.

And if you think for one second, "Glad I'm not like other people and I don't do all that stuff. I don't grumble. I don't test God. I'm faithful to my wife. No pornography here. I don't worship idols. I'm a good person." Then read verse twelve. If you think, think, you are standing firm, be careful. Self-assurance leads to no assurance. Because self-assurance leads away from Jesus assurance. Self-righteousness means no righteousness. Because there's no righteousness from Jesus in self-righteousness. The thinking you are standing is a more subtle sin, but it's still sin. This has to be one of the longest, most severe warnings in all of the Bible.

And it's immediately followed by one of the most beautiful promises. God is faithful. God keeps every promise. Especially this one. God will never let you down. It doesn't matter that you have been unfaithful. God has always been and will always be faithful. God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. Jesus already suffered temptation. In your place. Jesus was tempted in every way. Yet was without sin. Jesus is so much more than an example in temptation. Jesus is our substitute in temptation. Jesus perfectly resisted so God can't see your sins. God doesn't see your sins. God only sees Jesus. Jesus never sinned. So God sees you as one who has never sinned. Yes, I meant to say exactly that. Jesus never sinned. So God sees you as one who has never sinned. Jesus bore sin. For you. Jesus carried sin. Yes yours! Jesus is your way out, your way out of sin, your way out from sin sticking to you. Sin stuck to Jesus. Jesus is your way out. Your way out from the guilt of sin. Jesus gutted guilt from your gut. God gave that guilt to Jesus and God forgave that guilt. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. Instead, God provides Jesus. God provides the way out so that you and Jesus can bear it together.

You will still be tempted. Not by God. But you will still be tempted, but when you are tempted, God will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. God provided the ultimate way out in Jesus. But don't forget about all the other ways out God provides. Maybe these seem trite or easy to say and difficult to do. But can you keep a Bible verse handy on your phone, your computer screen that empowers you to avoid that website, that app? Maybe one like, "I am strong in all things through Christ who gives me strength"? Can you have a verse like, "Bad company corrupts good character," that keeps you away from those who lead you into temptation? Can you find two Christian friends who all agree to accept your call or text anytime to be a burden bearer, to help you carry that burden, when you just don't think God could love you anymore?

You know, the two times I've done an escape room, I was with a bunch of people I didn't really know. And people who didn't know each other. It made it a lot less fun. A couple people were running in this direction. A couple people knew what they were doing and found a bunch of clues and made it into the next room. I thought, "This would be a lot more fun with friends. We could find the way out better and together." Cue light bulb! That's why we are here today. We are finding the way out together. And that's so much better. We are focusing on Jesus, the way out. How much better to stay on that way out, together. How much better to find the clues together in God's Word, to ask for God's help together by praying to him. Yeah, here on earth, Jesus is the way out of temptation. Jesus is the way out of all sin. Jesus the way out of all troubles to the perfect promised land of heaven. Jesus is the way out. Amen.

God is faithful. He will provide a way out. Amen.