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**Spurgeon's
Sermons Volume
47: 1901**



Charles Spurgeon





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Author(s): Spurgeon, Charles Haddon (1834-1892)

Publisher: Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library

Subjects: Practical theology
Worship (Public and Private) Including the church year,
Christian symbols, liturgy, prayer, hymnology
Times and Seasons. The church year

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The Tenses

A Sermon

(No. 2718)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 17th, 1901,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At [the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington](#).

On Thursday Evening, May 13th, 1880.

"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."—[2 Corinthians 1:10](#).

WHEN children are learning their grammar, they have to pay particular attention to the tenses of the verbs; and it is important for Christians also to remember their tenses,—to recollect the past, the present, and the future. Our text brings all three very vividly before us, and reminds us that God hath delivered, doth deliver, and will yet deliver.

First, let us think for a little while concerning the past. How old art thou, my friend? How many of thy years hast thou employed profitably, and how many hast thou allowed to run to waste? For how many years hast thou wrought the will of the flesh, and been a servant of sin and Satan? How long hast thou been born again? What is thine age spiritually? Take down the record of thy life, and examine it, from the days of thy childhood, through youth and early manhood, up till now. It is a book which should do us good to read; in some respects, all its pages may make us weep; and yet, viewed in another light, many of them may give us cause to sing. This is the one book in the library that many people do not like to take down and read, for there are so many blots in it, and so many humbling records; yet "God requireth that which is past," and it is a token of wisdom for a man to talk with his past years, and to learn from them the many lessons they are able to teach. All the days we have lived will go before us to the judgment seat, and each one will bear its record, and leave it there; so let us not be oblivious of that which God remembers, but let us recollect it that we may be penitent for all that has been wrong in it, and that we may be grateful for all that has been right.

Next, think about the second part of life, namely, the time present; and here let me urge upon you, dear friends, the importance of valuing the present. In fact, time present is the only time that you have. The past has gone, and you cannot recall it; the future will never really be yours, for, when it comes, it will be present, too. It is only in the present that we live; so that, if we waste these precious hours that are with us now, we waste all that we have. If we serve not God to-day, when will we serve him? To-morrow? Nay, for when that opportunity comes, "to-morrow" will have been changed into "to-day." Let us endeavor, as God

shall help us, even to watch our moments so as not to waste one of them. It is a good thing to have our life divided up into short periods. The other day, I saw John Wesley's diary, or rather, horary, for it had in it not merely an entry for every day, but for every distinct occupation for every twenty minutes. The good man made his days to have many hours in them, and his hours seemed to have more minutes in them than most men's hours have, because he did not waste any of them, but diligently used them all in his Master's service. God help us all to do the same by paying great attention to the present portion of our life!

As for the future, there is an idle curiosity which prompts men to try to live in it; that we must renounce. But there is a gracious expectation which enables us to live in it, a holy anxiety which prompts us to prepare for it. It is greatly wise for us to talk with those years that are to come if we talk with them in view of their end. I would have you familiar with your graves, for you will soon be in them; and more familiar still with your resurrection dwelling-place, remembering that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Let us often project ourselves beyond the present into the future; to gather strength from the future, is frequently the best way to deal with the present. You will be able more easily to bear your present burdens when you think how short is the time in which you will have to carry them. Your "light affliction, which is but for a moment," will seem scarcely like a feather's weight to you when you anticipate the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which God hath prepared for you.

I recommend to you, therefore, this rule of three, and advise you always to consider the past, the present, and the future; and just now I invite you to do so in connection with the delivering mercy of God. He *hath* delivered us; he *doth* deliver us; he *will* deliver us. And, first, I am going to point out to you *three trains of thought*; next, *three lines of argument*; and, thirdly, *three inferences*.

I. First, THE TEXT SUGGESTS THREE TRAINS OF THOUGHT.

The first is this, *memory, which tells us of the deliverances in the past*: "who delivered us from so great a death." Take the words exactly as Paul wrote them, and recall how God has delivered some of us from death. A few here, perhaps, have been very near to death in sickness. Some of us have several times in our lives looked into eternity; our illness has been no child's play, and we have realized the possibility, or even the probability of our soon passing away from all the engagements of this mortal life, and standing before our God. But we have been raised up again; we have come forth from our chamber, tottering on our staff, perhaps, through weakness, yet we are still preserved, the living, the living, to praise the Lord, as we do this day. I have no doubt that almost all of you have had, at one time or another, some very special proof that "unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."

Our past deliverances, however, have not only been from physical death; we have had greater deliverances than that. There was, first of all, our deliverance from spiritual death. Do you not remember the time, dear brother, dear sister, when you were brought out of

nature's darkness into God's marvellous light? You say that you do not know the day when this great change took place; never mind if you do not, it is not at all essential if you can now say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Some of us do remember the very day when we came to Christ, and rested in him; and we do, with our whole heart and soul, bless him that we were delivered from that terrible death which had so long held us in captivity. God rescued us by his grace, and enabled us to come forth from our grave of sin, looking unto Jesus, and longing to be made like him.

Further, some of you remember when you were delivered from despair. It is an awful thing to be driven away from all hope of salvation, and to be at your wits' end. You were not all brought to Christ in a terrible tempest, as some of us were; many of you came to him under happier circumstances. Be very thankful that it was so; but some of us were hard put to it when we tried to touch the hem of his garment, we were pressed and crushed in the crowd, and seemed to lose our very breath. I remember how, when I was under conviction of sin, my soul rolled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man; yet the Lord delivered me, and taught me to rest upon him, and thus even full assurance became possible although I had thought, aforesaid, that mercy could never reach me. Beloved, if I am describing your experience as well as my own, let us together bless the Lord for his mercy in deliverance from so great a death. The remembrance of our deliverance from sin and despair must take the first rank amongst our grateful reminiscences.

But since then, have you not been many times delivered out of temptation? You said, with the psalmist, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped;" yet the Lord graciously preserved you. If you look back with careful eye, you will see many occasions where, if it had not been for interposing mercy, you would either have fallen into the bog on your right hand, or into the quagmire on your left. If the Lord had not piloted your vessel, it would have been wrecked on the rocks of Scylla or engulfed in the whirlpool of Charybdis. Do you not wonder, sometimes, how you ever got through that peculiar temptation, which was so suitable to your circumstances, and so fascinating to your flesh? Yet you did not know, at the time, that it was a temptation; and you had not the wisdom necessary to meet the craft of Satan; yet you were not taken captive in the Satanic net, cunningly as it was spread; and for that deliverance you must bless the name of the Lord. There are some of you who ought to praise him for deliverances over which you wept at the time. He would not let you have what you desired; you were disappointed, and you talked about your heart being broken. Ah! but the Lord's dealings with you saved you from having a broken heart. You said, "Alas! alas! I have lost something which I fondly cherished." It was well that you did lose it, for that which you thought was a bracelet sparkling with jewels was a viper, which, had you grasped it, would have stung you to death. Blessed be God for not hearing some of our prayers! Blessed be the Lord for not gratifying many of our desires!

We ought to praise him, too, for our deliverances in the time of trouble. You are not all tried alike. I am very thankful that some of you are not troubled as others are; but I know that I am addressing some whose trials have been very many and very heavy. Your road has been a very rough one. John Bunyan truly says, "A Christian man is seldom long at ease; when one trouble's gone, another doth seize;" and that has been true in the lives of many of us. We can say, with the psalmist, "We went through fire and through water." Some of God's children have been brought very low in their circumstances, so that they have had to live "from hand to mouth,"—though I do not know that many of us live very differently from that;—but there are some godly people who never have any reserve store even if they do not actually come to want. I do not know that there is anything very grievous in that, for the sparrows and the ravens live in that style, yet God cares for them. But some of you find it to be a trial to have scantiness in the home, or sickness in your own person, or one who is dear to you as your own life constantly afflicted. There are all sorts of losses and crosses, trials and troubles, for the godly to endure. Yes; but none of these things have crushed us yet, for the Lord hath delivered us. Here is a poor widow, and she wonders how she ever brought up that large family of little children. She scarcely knew how to provide for them all when she had a husband, and yet, when the head of the house was gone, they were provided for; it is very wonderful, yet it was done; and you, who seemed to see all your prospects suddenly dissolve, like the mirage of the desert, were helped. You said, at one time, "If such-and-such a thing should happen, it would kill me." It did happen, yet it did not kill you, for you are here to testify to the Lord's delivering mercy. One Job's messenger after another came to bring you evil tidings, yet the Lord delivered you from the trials which threatened to crush you. I cannot stay to mention all those past deliverances; and, probably, most of them are not even known to us. Glory be to God for unknown mercies,—favours which came in the night when we most needed them, favours which helped us to sleep and to awake refreshed, favours that stole, with silent footfall, into our home and our heart, and went away leaving traces of the sacred oil of divine mercy behind them.

That is the first train of thought,—memory, which tells of deliverances in the past.

The second is *observation, which calls attention to present deliverance*: "and *doth* deliver." Open your eyes, my brethren and sisters, and see how God is delivering you at this moment. I do not say that, with the most widely opened eye, you will perceive all your deliverances; for, many times, you have been saved from trouble, while, on other occasions, you have been delivered out of it. I have often told you the story of the good old Puritan who met his son at a half-way house. When the young man came in, he said, "Father, I had a very special providence as I rode here to-day." "What was that, my son?" "My horse stumbled three times very badly, yet I was not thrown." "And I have had an equally special providence in riding here." "What was that?" "My horse never stumbled all the way, so I was not thrown." You know that, if we are in a railway accident, and escape from any hurt, we say, "What a

providence!" Yes, but what a providence it was when you were preserved from a railway accident by stopping at home! Oftentimes, we do not see the very thing that has the most of mercy in it. What evidences of divine deliverance there are in the fact that you are here this moment! A comparatively trifling incident might have resulted in your death. You may be, tomorrow morning, in doubt as to which of two ways you should take; but there will be the providence of God directing you which to choose, and your choice of that one may affect the whole of the rest of your life.

If you are not just now being assailed by any temptation, it is because God is delivering you from it. Yet it may be that Satan is planning some fresh temptation with which to assail you; but, though he desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat, Christ is praying for you, that your faith fail not. We might have fallen into doctrinal error had it not been for God's restraining mercy. How apt thoughtful people are to be carried away by the particular novelty of the hour! It seems as if they could not resist the cogency of the argument by which the new teaching is supported, but we have been kept from yielding to it by having our hearts established in the faith, so that we have not believed every novel doctrine, but have judged it by the Word of God, and so have been kept from wandering into devious ways.

How graciously God is preserving many of us from the tongue of slander! It is a wonderful thing for any man to live much in public without being accused of some vile crime; and the woman who lives in the most retired position, the housewife who does nothing but look after her own children, will find somebody or other slandering her. You cannot always escape from the envenomed tongue of slander, be you what you will and where you will; and for God to keep the reputation of any Christian man unstained year after year, is a subject for the greatest thankfulness.

We do not know where or what we might have been if God's gracious protection had not been like a wall of fire round about us, as it is even now, for still doth the Lord deliver all those who put their trust in him. I want you, dear brothers and sisters, to believe with unquestioning confidence that God is delivering you just now. You know that he *has* delivered you, be quite as sure that he is delivering you at this moment. "Oh!" says one, "I am shut up in the dungeon of despair." Yes; but your Lord has a key that can open the door, and so let you out. "Ay; but I am in great want." But he knows all about it, and he has his basket in his hand full of good things with which he is going to supply all your needs. "Oh!" says another, "but I am sinking in the flood." But he is throwing the life-belt over you. "Oh, but I am fainting!" But he is putting a bottle of sweet perfume to your nose to refresh your spirit. God is near thee, to revive and cheer thy fainting soul. Perhaps someone says, "I find faith concerning the past and concerning the ultimate future tolerably easy; but it is faith for the next hour or two I cannot so readily exercise." At certain times, it is found that trial is peculiarly present, but one cannot always realize that God is "a very present help in trouble;" yet it is true. He hath delivered, and he doth deliver.

The third train of thought in this,—*expectation looks out of the window upon the future*: "in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Yes, dear friends, there may be many trials before you yet; but there is a mass of mercy laid up in store to meet those trials. Troubles such as you have never yet known, as well as repetitions of those you have experienced, will surely come upon you; but as your days are, so shall your strength be, for your Lord will continue to deliver you. As the eyes gradually fail, and the limbs grow weak, and the infirmities of age creep over us, we are apt to be distressed; yet our Lord will not forsake us. When severe sickness invades our mortal frame, and our pains are multiplied and intensified, we wonder how we shall hold out to the end; and especially as we look forward to the time of death,—not always viewing it in the true light, we say, "What shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? How shall we be able to bear the stern realities of our last hours?" Be of good comfort, my brother, my sister; he who hath delivered, and doth deliver, will yet deliver. As surely as the trial comes, the way of escape shall be opened up for you by your Lord. Will you try to realize all this of which I have been speaking? He *hath* delivered you; then, give him your gratitude: he *is* delivering you; then, give him your confidence: he *will* deliver you; then give him a full and joyful expectation, and begin even now to praise him for mercies which are yet to come, and for grace which you have not tasted yet, but which you shall taste in his good time.

II. Now, in the second place, THE TEXT SUPPLIES THREE LINES OF ARGUMENT, all running to the same point.

The point to be proved is that the Lord will deliver his people; and I argue that *he will deliver us in the future because he has already begun to deliver us*. There is a chain of continuity here; he hath delivered, he doth deliver, and he will deliver. He began to work for our deliverance long before we sought him. The first movement was not from us to God, but from God to us. We were lying dead in trespasses and sins, and he came and quickened us. He gave his Son to die for us many centuries before we were born; he provided the gospel for us long before you and I had ever sinned; in all things he had the start, and was beforehand with us. Yet he need not have done all this, except that it was by his own choice and free will that he acted. I do rejoice in the free will of God which moved him to deliver us.

Surely, then, since the motive that impelled him to save us must have been in himself alone, that motive is still there. If he had begun to deliver us because he saw some goodness in us, or because we first applied to him, then he might leave us after all; but as the commencement was with himself, out of his own heart, spontaneously, depend upon it that, as he began the work, he will carry it on. God has no more knowledge of any one of us than he had at the first. When he began with us, he knew what we should be; foresaw all our sins and all our follies, all our ingratitude and all our backsliding. He did not enter, blindfold, upon a task which, after second thoughts, he would have to relinquish; but, even from eternity, he saw us just as we have turned out to be. Yet he began with us; and having begun

with the deliberation of eternal love, let us be quite sure that he will prosecute his gracious purpose with the perseverance of eternal love. If there had been, at the first, some reason in us why God should begin to deliver us, then, that reason being removed from us, God might cease to deliver us; but as the reason was not in us, but in himself, since he can never change, the reason for our deliverance abides the same, and the argument is good and clear,—God *hath* delivered us, then he *will* deliver us.

The next argument comes from the fact that, *as he is now delivering us, therefore he will continue to do so*. Here is the continuity of his grace. Now look, beloved; he has, up to this hour, continued to deliver you and me who have trusted him. How many times has he delivered me? Out of how many troubles have I been delivered? From how many sins have I been delivered? Well, then, if the Lord has kept on delivering me so long, I argue that, if he had ever meant to stop, he would have stopped before now; and, therefore,—

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."

When a man begins to build, we reckon that he will finish the building if he can. We know that our God can complete what he has commenced, so we conclude that he will do so. I feel that he has gone so far with me that he cannot give me up now.

"Can he have taught me to trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

No, that can never be; and many of you must feel just as I do about this matter. Some of you are, as it were, sitting on the very doorstep of heaven; you are over eighty years of age, so you cannot be here long; cannot you trust the Lord for the few months or years you have yet to live? He has been helping you, my aged sister, ever since you were a girl; and he has delivered you out of all sorts of troubles, do you think that he will leave you now? And my dear venerable brother, you knew the Lord when you were but a boy, and he has never left you yet; will he forsake you now? No; blessed be his name, he will not! All those years of his favour go to confirm us in the conviction that he will keep on delivering us till he brings us safely home.

The Lord has not only delivered us so often, but he has also done it in such a wonderful way, that he must go on working in a similar fashion. What marvellous wisdom has he sometimes displayed in delivering us from the consequences of our own folly! Often hath he seemed to lavish his mercy upon us that he might help us in our time of need, and not once has he failed us. There is not one broken promise of his, nor one covenant blessing that he has ever withheld from us. If any of you, who have known him the longest, have aught to say against your God, say it; but you have not. You have never had any reason for doubting him, nor have you ever had any suspicion of his faithfulness raised in your mind

by anything that he has done which might lead you to mistrust him in the future. He *hath* delivered, he *is* delivering, and he will *yet* deliver. There are two arguments drawn from the past and the present.

The best argument, however, comes *from God himself*: "in whom we trust." He is always the same, and everything is ever present to his unchanging mind. What was the nature of God when he first determined to deliver me? Was it love? Then, it is love now. What was the motive which impelled the Son of God when he came from above, and snatched me from the deep waters? It was love, surprising love; and it is surprising love which still moves him to deliver me. Did I sing about his faithfulness, the other day? That faithfulness is just the same to-day. Have I adored his wisdom? That wisdom is not exhausted.

There is not only the same nature in God as there always was, but there is also the same unchanging purpose. You and I shift and change; and we are obliged to do so, because we make rash promises and faulty plans; but God, who is infinitely wise, always keeps to his purpose. Now, if it was his original purpose to save us,—and it must have been, or he would never have delivered us as he has done,—that purpose still stands, and shall for ever stand. Though earth's old columns bow, though heaven and earth shall pass away, as the morning rime dissolves in the beams of the rising sun, yet the decree of the immutable Jehovah shall never be changed. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

III. Time fails me, so I can only very briefly show you that THE TEXT IS OPEN TO THREE INFERENCES.

The first inference I draw from it is, that *we shall always be in danger so long as we are here*. The Lord hath delivered, doth deliver, and he will deliver, so we shall always need divine deliverance while we are in this world. We must not expect here to be ever out of gun-shot of the enemy. You may depend upon it, brethren and sisters in Christ, that you will always have tribulation as long as you are in the world, you will have trials in the flesh, you will have trials in the spirit, you will have trials from God, and trials from Satan; and if, at any time, you are a long while without any trouble, keep a good look-out for it, for it is probably on the way to you. We should always suspect some danger nigh when we perceive too much delight. When God has given us a long stretch of smooth sailing, it well behoves us to steer our vessel cautiously, and to be ready to furl our sails at any moment, for a cyclone may be upon us before we know where we are. We need not ask the Lord to send us trouble, but when it comes, let us have the grace to accept it, and to glorify God in it. While we are in this world, we shall always know that it is the world, so let us not make any mistake about the matter; the devil is the devil, the world is the world, and the flesh is the flesh. None of these things have changed, and the mercy is that God has not changed, he is still the same as ever he was. If I found that the world was not the world, I might be afraid that God was not God; but that can never be the case, So, as trials are always arising, I may fairly suspect

that they always will come while this time-state lasts; but I also fully believe that God will always be the same, and that he will deliver all who trust in him.

The second inference from the text is, that *we may constantly expect a display of God's delivering grace*. The past says, "He *has* delivered;" the present says, "He *doth* deliver;" and the future says, "He will *yet* deliver." Yesterday, God was very gracious to me; to-morrow he will be very gracious to me; and the same will be true the next day, and the next day, and the next day, until there shall be no more days, and time shall be swallowed up in eternity. Between here and heaven, every minute that the Christian lives will be a minute of grace. From here to the throne of the Highest, you will have to be continually supplied with new grace from the Lord who sits on high. Dear brother, you never live a truly holy, happy, blessed day, except by divine grace. You never think a right thought, never do a right act, you never make any advance heavenward except by grace. I like to think that it is so, that every day I am a monument of mercy; that every day a fresh display of sovereign grace is made to me; every day my Father feeds me, my Saviour cleanses me, the Comforter sustains me. Every day, new manifestations of the lovingkindness of the Lord break forth upon my wondering soul, and give me fresh visions of his miraculous love. I could not find another word to express what I wanted to say, that one seemed to leap into my mouth just then,—his *miraculous* love! And so it is, miracle-working love, making the Christian's life to be a series of miracles, at which angels shall gaze for ever in astonished adoration of the amazing love of God to guilty men. So I reckon that we may go onward with great confidence; for, although every day will bring dangers, every day will also witness divine deliverances.

Thirdly, the last inference I draw from the text is, that *our whole life should be filled with praise of God our Deliverer*. How doth it run? He delivered us, and now we deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He delivered us; he doth deliver us;—but what about the future? We must deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He hath delivered; he doth deliver; and *he will yet deliver*;—the same Person, working in the beginning, in the centre, and at the close. It is all of God from first to last; there is not one deliverance which you have ever had which you can ascribe to anyone but the Lord alone. Inside heaven's gate, all the praise is given to the Triune Jehovah: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be;" and outside heaven's gate, let us sing the same song, to the same tune; let it always be to the praise of grace, *grace*, GRACE; to the God of grace, the Father of grace, the Christ of grace, the Holy Ghost and his grace; and to God be all the glory, for ever and for ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 733, 735.