

September 7  
Daniel 4

Chapter 4 might be the most remarkable document in the whole Bible: the personal testimony, written by his own hand in the Aramaic language, of King Nebuchadnezzar -- the greatest king in the history of the world in his day -- the most prolific builder in the ancient world -- the builder of the hanging gardens of Babylon -- one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. "I Nebuchadnezzar was living contentedly at home in the luxury of my palace ..." and Nebuchadnezzar has another dream.

This time he has so much confidence in Daniel that he is willing to tell God's prophet the contents of this dream. He is sure that the interpretation Daniel will give will indeed come from God and be true and accurate. The tree of this vision, the one that reaches the sky and is visible to earth's farthest bounds, sounds very much like the tree that Jesus describes as representing the kingdom of heaven in a parable that he tells, but the tree Nebuchadnezzar sees is himself. At the command of the heavenly watcher, (an angel) the tree is cut down and its stump is banded with iron.

A full year passed between the coming of the dream and the execution of God's judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar. Those twelve months were the period of time allotted by a long suffering God for the king to repent of his overwhelming pride, but he did not do it. So everything the prophet had predicted came true and for seven years (a very common length of time in the Bible) Nebuchadnezzar the Great was mad -- living like a beast in the gardens of his kingdom.

At the end of that time a much chastened and repentant king is given back his reason and his kingdom. The most remarkable personal testimony in the Bible ends with these words, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the king of heaven for all His acts are right and His ways are just and he can bring low those whose conduct is arrogant." Nobody knew that better than Nebuchadnezzar.

Do remember, in the Book of Isaiah, the declaration of the Lord, "I will not share my glory with any man." That is the explanation of this incident. Nebuchadnezzar was claiming for himself the glory that belonged to Almighty God alone. God will never tolerate that.

The old theologian used to talk about something called, "irresistible grace." What is meant by that term is that when God sets His love upon any individual and decides to save him, the power of his grace and love will be irresistible. We may try, as did Nebuchadnezzar to resist His call upon our lives, but we will always fail because God's will and God's love are so much stronger than our own. Now please understand that I am not saying that we do not exercise real choices or that we cannot for a time shake our rebellious fists in God's face. I do say, however, that he will always win a contest of the wills. We cannot hold out indefinitely against the sovereign hand of God.

I know that many of you have never before heard anyone say what I just said. You have been taught that man's will is so free that God's will is bound, and there are some examples in scripture that would seem to support that view. Nevertheless, passages like Daniel 4 coupled with teaching passages like the 9th chapter of Romans, seem to argue for the view of the Puritans -- God's grace is truly irresistible. I don't know about you, but I am very thankful for this truth, because I would not have chosen Him. He chose me.