

THE UNSPEAKABLE WORDS

The Paradox of Paul's Private Revelation

“How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard **unspeakable words**, which it is **not lawful** for a man to utter.”
— 2 Corinthians 12:4

The Paradox

If the words were experienced in Paradise, they are perfectly good. Why are they unlawful to share?

Lawful = **Compliant** = **God's Will**
(Permitted by or in accordance with law) (Consistent with a ruling authority) (Authorized for release at this time)

The unspeakable words were not blasphemous or forbidden under Old Testament law. They were simply words that God willed to keep secret. They were for Paul, and Paul alone.

The Precedent of Divine Redaction

God frequently seals truth until its appointed time of revelation.

Isaiah 29:11



“The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed...”

Daniel 12:4, 9



“...shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.”

Revelation 10:4



The Seven Thunders utter their voices, but John is commanded: “Seal up those things... and write them not.”

The Great Contrast: Paul's True Mandate

1

Ephesians 3:9

To make all men see the fellowship of the mystery.

Colossians 1:26

The mystery hid from ages, now made manifest to his saints.

2

3

Romans 16:25-26

The secret kept since the world began, now made known to all nations.

God gave Paul immense revelation explicitly so Paul could make it known to others. The “unspeakable words” break this rule entirely.

If Paul's earthly job was to reveal God's grace to the world, why did God give him a special revelation that he couldn't share with anyone?

The unparalleled physical and emotional opposition of Paul

Stripes above measure

Beaten with rods

Stoned

Shipwreck

Perils of waters

Perils of robbers

In the deep

Wilderness

Weariness

Painfulness

Hunger

Cold

The care of all
the churches

A unique calling requires unique preparation



Just as Moses received the Old Testament Law at Sinai, Paul received the Dispensation of Grace in Arabia (Galatians 1:15-17, 4:25).

But God knew the precise cost of this calling from the very beginning:

“For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” — Acts 9:16

The Two Summits of Revelation

Paul's journey to Arabia (Gal 1:17, 4:25) places him in direct parallel with Moses.

		Moses	Paul
1	The Location	Mt. Sinai	Mt. Sinai in Arabia
2	The Dispensation	The Old Testament Law	The Dispensation of Grace (DOG)
3	The Audience	The Nation of Israel	The Entire World

God gave Paul the DOG to share with the world. The “unspeakable words” represent a completely separate, entirely private category of information.

Abundant suffering requires
abundant vision

Extreme
Opposition



Heavenly
Vision



“Where there is no vision, the people perish...” — Proverbs 29:18

The physics of Paul’s ministry: Unparalleled opposition
demanded an unparalleled spiritual counterweight.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...”

– Proverbs 29:18

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard... the things which
God hath prepared for them that love him.”

– 1 Corinthians 2:9



Massive suffering requires massive sustenance. The unspeakable words were an intimate, hyper-concentrated dose of future glory (Isa 64:4, Eph 3:20). They were perfectly engineered to strengthen Paul’s endurance for a life of unyielding torment.

The unspeakable words provided divine fuel
for an impossible task

**The unspeakable words were
not a puzzle to be solved.**

They were a private reservoir of strength given to
Paul to endure a public life of unparalleled suffering.
(2 Corinthians 1:5, Colossians 1:24)

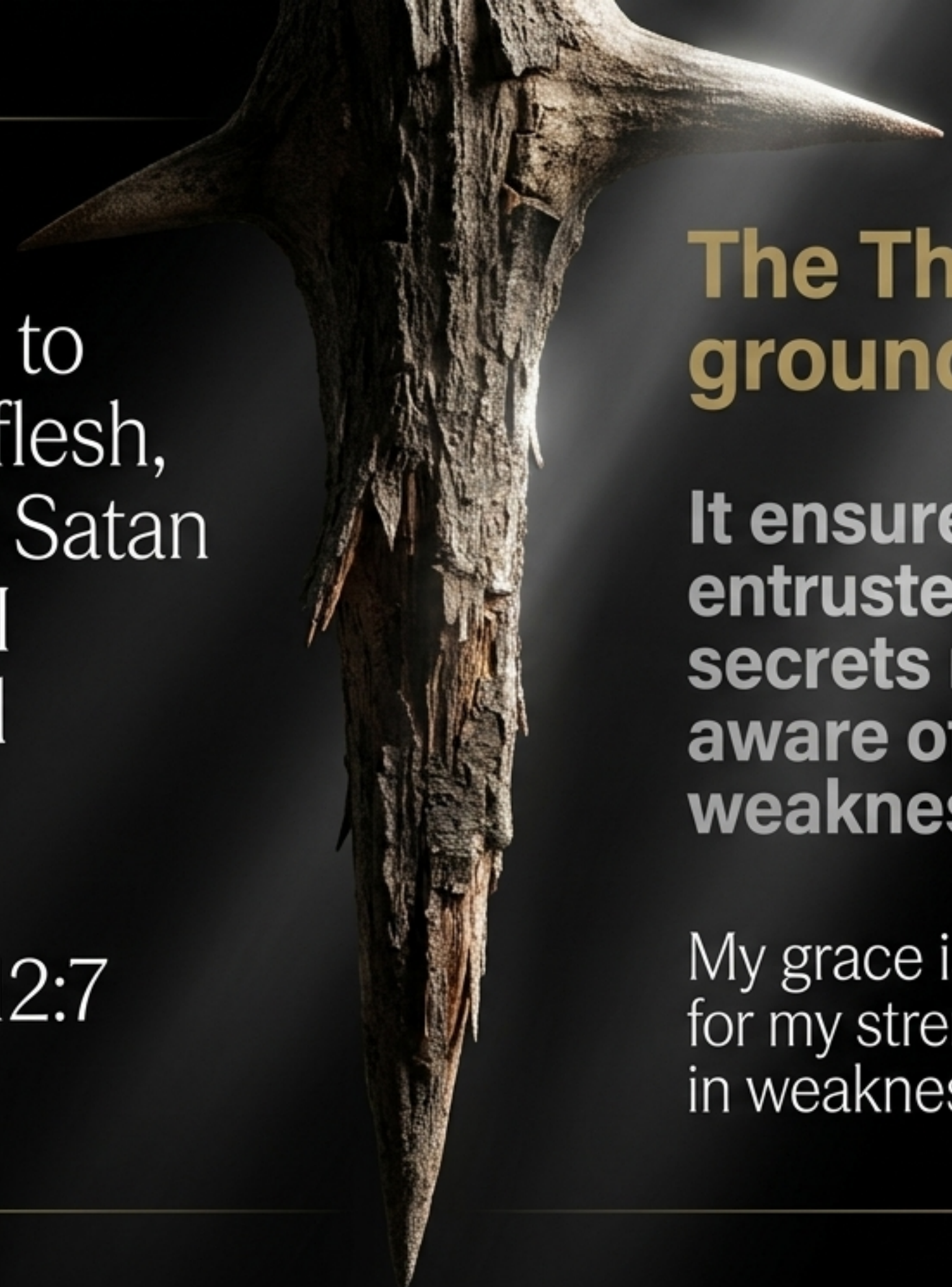
The Abundance of Revelations

Paul experienced realities that human language literally could not contain. He stood in the Third Heaven.

The Threat of Exaltation

Lest I should be exalted above measure... (2 Cor 12:7)

Such profound, exclusive knowledge creates an immense, gravitational pull toward spiritual pride.



...there was given to me a *thorn* in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

— 2 Corinthians 12:7

The Thorn acts as a grounding wire.

It ensures that the man entrusted with heavenly secrets remains acutely aware of his earthly weakness.

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor 12:9)

The divine equation of sufficient grace of **sufficient grace**

$$\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Extreme} \\ \text{Weakness} \end{array} \right] + \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Sufficient} \\ \text{Grace} \end{array} \right] = \text{Perfect Strength}$$

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.
Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities...” — 2 Corinthians 12:9

The unspeakable words remain a mystery.
The perfect strength they produced remains a testimony.