

REASONS FOR THE “MOOD SHIFT” BETWEEN 2 CORINTHIANS 9 AND 10

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1. Change of situation

During the process of writing, Paul received word that the situation in Corinth had taken a turn for the worse again. As a result, the rest of the letter has more of a stern character.

2. Different letter

2 Corinthians 1-9 represents a substantial part of the fourth Corinthian correspondence, while 10-13 represents part of a lost “severe letter” written between what we know as 1 and 2 Corinthians.

3. Change of audience

The Corinthian church had a mixed consistency. Chapters 1-9 addressed those who respected Paul’s leadership and honored his directives and teachings. Chapters 10-13 aimed more at those who resisted his responsibility for, and authority over, the Corinthian church.

4. Aspects of approach

In the first nine chapters, Paul spoke in a more conciliatory tone because he genuinely appreciated the progress in solving the problems at Corinth, solutions enhanced by his painful visit, by Titus’ interim work, and by the reception they gave to 1 Corinthians.

In the last part, he spoke about another aspect of his responsibility and struck negative notes of a disciplinary nature. Encouragement and appreciation on the one hand combined with warning and discipline on the other. He put the positive first as a strategy to enhance their reception.

Mood shifts appear elsewhere in biblical literature and are handled the same way by various scholars: Philippians 3:1 vs. 3:2-3:19; 4:1; 4:3; Isaiah 1-39 vs. 40-66.

Jeffery T. Reed lists the following reasons for mood shifts in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, spring 1996, p. 64. A sudden shift might be more natural in an informal personal letter:

- (a) Similar shifts occur in Romans 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 15:58; and Galatians 3:1; 4:21, which have not resulted in multiple-letter theories.
- (b) The author may have stopped writing and started again a few days later, perhaps having received news about problems (at Philippi) or just taking up new subject matter. The intervening time had changed Paul’s mood.
- (c) That a shift in tone demands a multiple-letter theory is impossible to verify.
- (d) There are semantic and topical connections between the two parts.
- [e) In Philippians there is little consensus on where the interpolation begins.]