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Paul Defends His Apostolic Authority

10:1 to 13:14



An abrupt change in tone occurs in **Chapters 10-13**. It becomes so dramatically different that a debate has raged for years over how the last four chapters of **Second Corinthians** relate to the first nine. Some go so far as to say that **Chapters 10-13** form the nucleus of a totally separate letter, one that was circulated independently of **Chapters 1-9**. Others suggest that the final four chapters were actually taken from **Paul's severe letter (to see [link click Af - The Problem of False Apostles](#))** and were added later to the end of **Second Corinthians**.¹⁹⁸ However, nothing in the text suggests anything other than that these last four chapters form a response to the first nine. Let me make **four points** in that regard.

First, the first nine chapters involve what the last four contain to such an extent that the nine cannot be properly understood without the four. The reverse is also true: the last four rest upon the preceding nine to such a degree that these four cannot be understood without the nine. All of the hints found in the first seven chapters in regard to opposition and opponents in **Corinth** leave us thirsty for answers until the last four chapters bring the complete answers to the questions raised by those hints. In addition, the last four chapters reveal why the collection for the poor in Jerusalem began to lag, and why **Paul** wrote **Chapters 8** and **9** to advance the matter of the collection.

All this shows us why the three main parts of the letter are arranged as they are. **Chapters 1** through **7** must come first; then **Chapters 8** and **9** must come regarding the collection;

and not until **Chapters 10** through **13** regarding **the false apostles**, and **their** personal attacks on **Paul**, can we see the rationale for the order.¹⁹⁹

Second, the first nine chapters were written to the repentant majority in the church who turned away from **the false apostles** and submitted to **Paul's** apostolic authority. **He** purposely put this first and did not interject it into what he had to say in answer to the personal attacks directed toward **him** by **the outsiders**. The final four chapters, however, were written to the sinful minority who continued to be held hostage to the teachings of **the false apostles**, and who were still trying to shake the confidence of others in **Paul** and stage a coup by assuming positions of power within it.²⁰⁰ There, **he** annihilates the last arguments and beliefs of **the false apostles** and thus destroys the last hold which **they** sought to maintain upon some of **the Corinthians**.

If we separate the first nine and the last four chapters, and eliminate the vital connection between the two, both sections become fragments, buildings unfinished, curiosities. This is especially true regarding the last four chapters. If they are severed from the first nine, what are we to do with them? Where shall we place them? They are not an independent unit; they must have had a connection with some other good-sized section. And if that section is not the first nine chapters of this letter, what has become of it? Whatever preceded the last four chapters must have been more important, more fundamental than these last four. If the first nine chapters had been lost, would only the last four be preserved? And how were these supposedly secondary chapters attached to **Second Corinthians** if it originally consisted of only nine chapters? How does it happen that every text has **13 Chapters**?

Third, the correlation between the first nine and the last four chapters are significant for both literary and historical criticism. The identical situation is reflected in both sections of the letter. What the first nine chapters reveal comes fully into view in the last four. If the letter originally consisted of only nine chapters, why did **Paul** not go to **Corinth** at once on receiving the report from **Titus**? The last four chapters show why he delayed going. Without those chapters **Paul** owed it to **the Corinthians** to explain **his** continued delay; yet no explanation would have been offered. All is clear if **his** letter contained **13 Chapters**.

In the last four chapters **Paul's** defense is made to **the Corinthians**, and against **the false apostles** with complete confidence. But we only know that because of what we have read in the first nine chapters. Without the nine, the four, taken by themselves, we would have to figure out what had happened previously on our own. And that would have been something like what happened in the first nine chapters. Leading words in the first nine are repeated in the second four just as they would naturally occur in two parts of the same letter.

Fourth, But the great difference is in **Paul's** tone! Brief doctrinal and ethical discussions of a general nature are scattered throughout the nine chapters. But no such discussions can be seen in the four chapters. More than that, there is irony and satire. **His** defense centers around personal issues. In the nine chapters we can see nothing of this nature. The very restraint that is evident in the nine chapters shows that **Paul** reserved the demolition of **the false apostles** for the final part of **his** letter. It was wise to do that. When **he** came to the demolition, **he** did a complete job of it. Those **false apostles** were not only presumptuous, **they** were outsiders. **The Corinthians** were to reject **them** completely. **They** attacked **Paul** with slanderous lies. Should **Paul** sugar-coat **his** disdain. No! **He** annihilated them. **He** broke the last hold which those **wolves-in-sheeps' clothing** had in **Corinth**.

But note how **Paul** distances those **false apostles** from the congregation. **He** was saving **the Corinthian** congregation from those dangerous invaders who had already done so much damage, damage that, fortunately, **Titus** had already largely repaired. Actually, the purpose of the entire thirteen chapters is one and the same. Because the four chapters attack the enemies outright, they correctly form just one part of the whole. Must the entire thirteen chapters attack in order to make up one letter? We think not.²⁰¹

As we are about to see, this is spiritual warfare of the most blatant nature. **Paul** is literally fighting for the soul of this church, a battle that is fiercely being waged with the future of the church and the eternal destinies of people hanging in the balance. **The apostle** wrote: **The weapons we use to wage war are not worldly. On the contrary, they have God's power for demolishing strongholds (10:4)**. Up to this point, **Paul** had been talking around the issue of the spiritual warfare taking place in the church. But now **he** will address it head on.²⁰²