

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 is a continuation of chapter 5. The punchline here is v. 1, which tells us not to receive God's grace in vain. It's this idea of softening your heart, or changing your attitude. But how does one go about changing their attitude? Is it by will power? Sometimes we know we shouldn't be thinking a certain way, but we can't help it. Maybe it's feeling discontented or bitter about your life; maybe it's feeling annoyed or resentful at other people. Most likely there is someone in your life, whether it be a family member or co-worker, who just makes you angry. Paul tells us here to have a change of heart. He just finished telling the Corinthians about all the blessings that come with being a child of God, including the hope of an eternal incorruptible body. However, the Corinthians still harbored animosity and envy in their hearts. So in v. 1 he quotes Isaiah 49:8, which prophesies of God's deliverance, saying that the promised day of salvation is now. We have received the long-awaited salvation, so let us not take it for granted. Meditate on what God has given you and ask Him to grant you a change of heart. Ask Him for a heart that responds to His grace with gratitude, one that receives His grace and love in order to show love and grace to others. In 8:9 Paul tells us that Jesus had everything, but gave it all up for us to make us rich. He is the model for us. Now that He has given us everything, we should share it with others. The love we received from Jesus, we should reflect towards each other. As we learned in 1:3-4, we must comfort others with the comfort we received from God. Now is the time of our salvation, so do not receive it in vain.

Paul switches gears in vv. 3-10 by revisiting a topic he covered in chapters 1-3. Recall that the Corinthians were listening to outside teachers who questioned Paul's apostleship and accused him of being flaky and not caring about them. Here, Paul justifies himself by offering proof that his ministry is sincere. So how does one go about measuring the success of ministry? We tend to regard church like a business. We have a product (the gospel) and customers (saints and sinners alike). We adopt best practices in business, like having a board that decides the direction of the church. So it's natural for us to measure success like businesses do, in terms of the bottom line. An example is counting the attendance each week. But with this assessment, it is easy to become falsely puffed up or insecure. Paul gives a completely different way of measuring the success of ministry. He lists the evidence of his ministry in v. 4-5. There is not a single thing in this list that sounds good. All are indicative of hardship and persecution. From a human

perspective this looks like failure. But in v. 6, Paul talks about the attitudes that show the success of the ministry. Success is not measured by people's response but by your attitude. Are you ministering in the Spirit, in purity, understanding, patience, kindness, and sincere love? Then in v. 7 he talks about the tools of ministry, which is the truth. The weapons of righteousness in the right hand and left can be seen as a sword and shield, similar to what is described in Ephesians 6:16-17. God's word is our sword. Use His truth to defend against falsehood and pierce through unbelief. You must have the right attitude in ministry, but you also must teach the right message, which is the gospel of Christ. In vv. 8-10 Paul again describes all types of responses to the gospel, many of which are negative. We see that many do not respond to the gospel. But the point is that in the midst of the rejection described in vv. 4-5 and 8-10, the success is measured not by the results but by the attitude and the message (vv. 6-7). This is a paradigm shift in the way we evaluate ministry. It's not about the outward results, but about teaching the truth with sincere love, in the Spirit and in the power of God. When Jesus tells you whether or not you have been a good and faithful servant, it will not be based on the number of converts you made but on your heart attitude towards others. This goes back to vv. 1-2, to the idea of having a change of heart. Do you serve to pat yourself on the back, or out of love? We shouldn't measure our success based on the response. Instead, just preach the truth of God's word wherever He gives you the opportunity, and to it with sincere love. Now is the time to have a change of heart, for now is the time of God's favor, the day of salvation.