



The Condition for Salvation in John's Gospel

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Biblically and historically, justification through faith in Jesus Christ (or salvation by grace through faith) has been the center of the Christian Gospel. Recently, Carl Henry called justification "a doctrine in crisis."¹ Indeed, not only the nature of justification is being challenged (imputed versus imparted righteousness) as he notes, but its condition of faith alone is also being challenged. If evangelical Christianity is to remain distinct from all other religions and aberrations, then defense of *the Faith* must begin with defense of *faith* as the only condition of justification (which we here call salvation).

There is a great controversy within our churches and theological schools threatening the unconditional Gospel of grace by compromising faith alone as the condition for salvation. From the beginning of the church, defense of the Faith focused largely on the apostles' explanation, reiteration, and defense of faith alone as the condition of salvation. This is the explicit concern of the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and it surfaces as well in some other epistles, such as Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and First John. Centuries later, the battle cry of the Reformation was *sola fide*, and so perhaps it must be heard again today.

The evangelical church is in need of a decisive authoritative voice in defense of *sola fide* as the condition and confirmation of salvation. This must include an overwhelming argument that faith alone saves as well as a delineation of what faith is and what it is not.

Actually, the church has always had such a voice, but that voice has been muzzled or ignored to a great degree. The church needs to listen to the Gospel of John to shape its understanding of the condition for salvation.

John's Gospel explicitly states that it was written to bring people to salvation. Yet its message and language does not receive preeminent treatment in the Gospel debate. When it does, its simple message is often obscured or tainted by theological baggage or presuppositions.

In this article, I will discuss the purpose of John's Gospel and why it should be determinative in our discussion of the condition for salvation. I will discuss John's use of the word *believe* in his Gospel and show how John's analogies for belief support faith alone as the one and only condition for salvation. Also significant is what John does *not* use to present the condition for salvation. Obviously, there will be very important practical implications from this study.

I. The Purpose of John

John's Gospel is distinguished from the Synoptic Gospels by its unique selection of material not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is commonly observed that 92% of its material is unique when compared to the Synoptics. It is also commonly agreed that this material presents a more doctrinal reflection in contrast to the more historical approaches of the Synoptic accounts. This can be clearly seen when John's prologue is compared to those of the Synoptics. Also, assuming a later date for John could posit a more mature theological expression of the Gospel and the condition for salvation related to the relevant issues of the day.²

These unique features should give extra weight to what John says about salvation and how it is obtained. Most helpful, however, is John's own statement of purpose.

A propitious distinctive of John's Gospel is his unequivocal statement of why he wrote it. He declares in John 20:30-31:

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Three corresponding emphases are evident in this purpose statement. First, it declares Jesus is the divine Son, the revelation of God: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." This merely continues the obvious emphasis on Jesus' deity in the Gospel. It also explains why John declares in v 30 that only certain miracles were recorded. Besides the explicit statements, it is commonly observed that deity is revealed through the selection of miraculous signs that Jesus performs (cf. 10:37-38; 14:10-11) and the "I am" statements He makes.³ In short, the book begins and ends with Christ's deity.

A second emphasis, more germane to our discussion, is the presentation of belief as the proper response to this revelation about Jesus Christ: "that you may believe." The evangelistic intent is obvious.⁴ It is hardly necessary to show that Christ's deity revealed by word or miracle in this Gospel is typically followed by someone believing or by an appeal to believe.

Furthering the argument for evangelistic intent is the third emphasis that presents eternal life as the result of belief: "that believing you may have life in His name."⁵ Since Jesus Himself is life (1:4; 14:6), eternal life is defined in terms of quality and experience more than quantity and duration (10:10).⁶ Eternal life is not an end, but the beginning of a relationship with the living God through Christ (17:3) that is enhanced through a subsequent life of faith. It has been said that the only thing better than winning a million dollars is spending it! John shows that faith in Christ secures the prize but also enjoys the prize. Thus the discourse to the disciples in chapters 13-17 easily fits into this purpose of deepening our present experience of the eternal life God shares with us who believe.⁷

John's purpose was to induce and foster faith in the Son of God for eternal life. One commentator expressed John's purpose as the "birth, growth, and completing of faith in the disciples."⁸ The church at large has always taken John's purpose in 20:31 at face value and understood this Gospel's intent to lead people to faith and a full life. Through the ages, believers have probably used John more than any other piece of literature to confront people with the Gospel. A modern illustration of this is the millions of pocket Gospels of John that have been distributed for over a century to share the Good News.

II. How the Condition for Salvation Is Presented

We can now observe some peculiarities about how John states and pictures the condition for salvation.

A. The Clear Condition

Given John's clear purpose, we would expect to see a clear condition for receiving eternal life, and we do. That condition is most frequently expressed by the verb *pisteu*) "believe," which is used 98 times in John (compared to 34 times in the Synoptics and 16 times in the rest of the NT). The significance of its verbal form is that it is presented as a response to the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It is not static, but dynamic.

Much discussion has focused on the use of the verb *pisteu*) either absolutely, or with the prepositions *eis* and *epi*, or with the dative case or *hoti*. While some would claim these constructions indicate different *kinds* of faith,⁹ a long discussion can be shortened by noting the many exegetes and theologians who recognize that all these combinations refer to saving faith.¹⁰

Likewise, both Morris and Tenney grant that *believe without* an object implies no less than *believe with* an object as when prepositions are used.¹¹ The prepositions *eis* and *epi* may emphasize the object of faith, but do not distinguish another *kind* of faith.

The construction of *pisteu*) with the dative is also clearly used for salvation, as in 5:24. Jesus said, "whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life."¹² The similarity of *believe* with the dative and *believe in* is seen in 6:29-30 and 8:30-31. It is exegetically impossible to separate their meanings in those passages. To *believe* Christ is to *believe in* Him, and vice versa. Thus the slightly less certain construction is clarified by John's favorite term for saving faith, *believe in*.

The *pisteu*) plus *hoti* construction also denotes saving faith. While some may argue that this combination denotes an intellectual acquiescence that falls short of effectual faith, it seems obvious that one cannot *believe in* unless he or she also *believes that*. As Nygren argues, "Each implies the other . . . In fact, if one really believes *that*, one can hardly not believe *in*."¹³ We find the *hoti* construction in two passages that clearly discuss the condition for salvation. John 8:24 says "if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins." The other passage is no less than John's purpose statement, 20:31 (cf. also 1 John 5:1).

Morris's summary statement on the various uses of *pisteu*) recognizes the essential meaning of trustful reliance for them all:

The conclusion to which we come is that, while each of the various constructions employed has its own proper sense, they must not be too sharply separated from each other...Whichever way the terminology is employed it stresses the attitude of trustful reliance on God which is basic for the Christian.¹⁴

Faith, then, when represented by *pisteu*) in its various forms denotes trust in something or someone. It assumes assent to the truthfulness and trustworthiness of a person or what is claimed. In John, faith is trustful reliance on Christ's promise to give eternal life to those who believe.

B. The Consistent Effect

Another pattern we see is the consistent effect of believing, which is salvation. Though sometimes faith is underdeveloped, faulty, weak, or minimal, it is always sufficient for eternal life. Since faith alone is sufficient, assurance is possible. Jesus said that whoever believes "has" (present tense) eternal life and "has passed" (perfect tense) from death into life (5:24). This is the present possession of the believer. The blind man who was given sight was able to declare "Lord, I believe!" (9:38), though it took him some time to come to that point of faith. In John, salvation is not conditioned on *how* one believes, but *whom* one believes, or not the *kind* of faith, but the *object* of faith.

If this is the case in the clear preponderance of uses of *believe* in John's Gospel, then the burden of proof lies on anyone who would except two passages which are admittedly troublesome, 2:23-24 and 8:30-31. While we must relegate an explanation of these passages to an appendix, we state our conclusion here: There is persuasive evidence in both passages that belief results in salvation. There are no convincing reasons for pleading here a special use of *believe* that falls short of salvation.

C. The Comparative Pictures

While there is one condition for salvation, John may represent that condition with figures of speech designed to *illustrate* the response of faith.

Look. In 3:14-15 the anticipated response is to *look* upon Christ and His work for eternal salvation, as the Israelites looked upon the serpent on a pole in the desert for their physical salvation (Numbers 21). The point of the illustration is the simple look of faith. This is quite contrary to the author who writes, "In order to look at the snake on the pole, they had to drag

themselves to where they could see it."¹⁵ Such exegesis is theologically driven and violates the clear intention of the serpent illustration as used by our Lord.

Hear. Similarly, John uses *hearing* to represent believing. More than the physical sense is involved. To hear is to listen, but also to accept as true, as we understand with the colloquial expression, "I hear you." Belonging to Jesus as His sheep is conditioned upon hearing His voice of truth (10:16, 27), as also is obtaining eternal life (5:24). The unbelief of the lost is due to their not hearing God's word (8:43, 47).

Enter. Speaking metaphorically of Himself as the door to the sheepfold, Jesus also pictures the response of faith as *entering* the door (10:9). To enter correlates with faith in that both express one's trust for protection from the threat of the enemy.

Feed. The notion of *feeding* on Christ (6:57), including eating His flesh and drinking His blood (6:54), is another analogy of the faith that obtains eternal life, as is clear in 6:35 and 6:47. This is similar to the drink of living water (eternal life) offered to the Samaritan woman (4:10, 14). To eat and drink is to appropriate or receive something upon which life depends. There is no work or merit associated with these activities. Rather, the benefit is from what is appropriated, which corresponds to the object of faith, which is Christ.

Come. Another metaphor for faith is expressed by the word *come*. In 5:40 coming to Christ obtains eternal life. In 6:35 *come* is equated with both eating and believing. Coming, drinking, and believing are used synonymously in 7:37-38 as the condition for salvation. To *come* is to trustingly approach Christ for help. It entails no human merit or effort.¹⁶

Receive. Another word that may represent faith is *receive*. The promise that any who receive Christ will become children of God is closely linked to believing in 1:12. *Believe* appears to be in apposition to *receive* here in order to explain it.¹⁷ In 1:12 to receive is to welcome or accept as true the person or words of Jesus Christ (3:11, 32-33; 5:43). This is in contrast to those who "did not know" and "did not receive" Jesus as the Christ in 1:10-11.

These pictures of faith all denote receptivity, agreement, or trust. All are essentially simple activities and essentially passive. None communicates the idea of merit, work, effort, or achievement. Neither do they communicate an exchange of one's life or the ongoing submission of one's life to Jesus as Master in order to obtain eternal life.

When we observe the clear statements in John about the condition for salvation, the effect of this condition, and the pictures of this condition, we conclude that John presents faith alone in Christ alone as the only condition for salvation.

III. How the Condition for Salvation Is Not Presented

Just as we pay attention to the peculiarities present in John's Gospel, we also note what is peculiarly *absent*.

A. The Absence of Qualifiers

It is extremely significant that we do not see qualifiers with the word *believe*. John does not condition salvation on whether one "really believes" or "truly believes." Neither does he speak of "genuine faith," "real faith," or "effectual faith." There is only one kind of faith. One either believes in something or he does not. Therefore, those who speak of "spurious faith" or "false faith" are psychologizing faith as the Scripture neither does, nor provides a basis for doing.

In contrast, John *does* use qualifiers to distinguish the real from the fraudulent in other concepts. He speaks of the "true light" (1:9), "true bread" (6:32), "true vine" (15:1), "true worshipers" (4:23), and "true God" (17:3). When he shows that even the unsaved can be referred to as *disciples* (6:60-64), he later calls the saved who adhere to His word "disciples indeed" (8:31).

B. The Absence of Other Conditions

Also in John, we do not see other conditions attached to faith or any condition replacing faith. For example, the word *repent* does not even occur once in John. In spite of the strained efforts of some to impose repentance on the salvation accounts in John,¹⁸ we find the opposite. In the incident of the woman at the well (4:1-26), Jesus' disclosure of the Samaritan woman's multiple mates would have been a perfect time to call her to repentance from this sin. Instead we find eternal life offered on the condition of asking (4:10) and drinking (4:14), both expressions of believing.

Of course, this is no problem to those who view repentance as a change of heart needed for salvation. Faith is the more specific way of expressing this change of heart because it focuses on Christ and His salvation from sin. Paul seemed to overlap the two concepts in the phrase "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

Neither do we find the condition for salvation stated as surrender or commitment of all of one's life to Jesus as Master.¹⁹ Salvation is totally and absolutely free and is not conditioned on human merit. It is what one receives, not earns, merits, or barter for. It will be given freely to whoever asks (4:10).

Similarly, we do not find salvation conditioned on continual obedience. If anything, we could argue that John's Gospel purposefully introduces us to those who believed in Jesus as Savior, but were less than fully committed as disciples or were partially obeying Him. Martha believed and was obviously saved (11:27; and we can assume Mary and Lazarus were too), but there is no indication that she followed Christ in the fullest sense of leaving home and family. Less than full confession and commitment are also found in the "secret disciple," Joseph of Arimathea (19:38).

Some would argue that Nicodemus was also in this category (cf. 19:39). In addition, the Jewish rulers mentioned in 12:42 believed in Christ, but did not confess Him publicly for fear of being ostracized by the other Jewish leaders.²⁰

The significance of John's lack of embellishment of faith and the absence of any other conditions emphasizes this one condition as the sole and sufficient means of obtaining eternal life. In terms of the data, what is present and what is absent, there is an overwhelming case presented in John for faith alone in Christ alone as the only condition for salvation. This is in perfect agreement with his purpose stated in 20:31.

John has spoken definitively on what it takes to be saved. His presentation carries the weight of his purpose for writing, "that you may believe." Let the debate over the Gospel begin with John's Gospel, unless we would accuse him of preaching half a gospel or easy-believism, or charge him with compromising the Gospel, acquiescing to the modern culture, or cheapening the Gospel. If we are to defend *the* Faith, then we must begin by defending faith alone in Christ alone, a simple, unconditional, non-meritorious response of accepting and trusting in God's promise.

IV. Some Practical Implications

If John has written *the* book on how to be saved, then we should submit our thinking to it and allow our ministries to be shaped by it. Yet how often do we hear salvation explained in terminology not found in the Bible or confused with other demands Jesus makes of those already saved?

Here are some important implications which flow from our study of John's presentation of salvation:

First, we must *give people something to believe*. Since it is the *object* of faith that saves, there must be meaningful content about that object, which is Jesus Christ Himself. We should present Jesus as the Son of God who died for our sins (1:29) and rose again. Content-less emotional appeals are not enough. It will do no good to call people to believe in something empty or erroneous.

Second, we must *invite people to believe* in Christ as their Savior. Christ's revelation demands a response. But let us invite them to *believe*, not "ask Him into your heart," "give your life to Christ," "surrender to Him as Lord," or any other unbiblical notions. This kind of unclear, erroneous, and confusing language will obscure the simple message of *sola fide*. We should be prepared to explain what it means to believe with appropriate illustrations or comparisons.

Third, we can *assure* people of their salvation on the basis of their having believed in God's Word. Faith in God's promise of eternal life is not the only form of assurance of salvation, but it is *sufficient* assurance to which any other assurance is secondary. Let's not lead them to conditions that are certainly not found in John's presentation.

Fourth, we must emphasize God's *Free Grace* in our Gospel. It is for those who ask, receive, or believe. We must keep salvation as simple (though not always easy) as John did. We should normally be positive in our approach, not condemning, as John depicts Jesus. If we choose to preach repentance, we must explain what it means and how it relates to faith so that it does not become another condition for salvation. But let us also admit that it was important enough to John that repentance *not* be included in his *Gospel of Belief*. To John, *the* sin that condemns is unbelief, and the only cure for this in his Gospel is belief.

He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (3:18)

APPENDIX

Does Belief Result in Salvation in John 2:23-24 and 8:30-31?

John 2:23-24

The reaction of Jesus in v 24, "Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men," causes many to argue that those in v 23 who "believed in His name when they saw the signs that He did" did not believe unto salvation. They argue that: 1) These only believed in Christ's name, not His person; 2) They only believed in the signs, not in Christ as Messiah; 3) Jesus rejected their faith in v 24.

In answer, we first observe that there is no explicit denial of the reality of true faith in this passage. "Believed in His name" in v 23 would more normally be taken to refer to salvation as in 1:12, 3:18 (negative), and 20:31. It is commonly agreed that the construction *pisteu) eis* is John's premier technical term for saving faith. Why did John use this language when he could easily have used a different expression?

Second, though signs prompted this faith, faith had as its object "His name," not His signs. Faith prompted by signs is seen elsewhere in John (1:47-49; 2:11; 4:52-53; 10:41-42; 11:42, 45; 20:26-29). Jesus even encouraged faith based on signs (1:50-51; 10:37-38; 14:11) and the apostle John expected signs to induce faith (12:37; 20:31). The ultimate miraculous sign, the resurrection, was expected to prompt faith as well.

Third, the use of *pisteu)* in v 24, usually translated "commit," is evidently a word-play on the use of *pisteu)* in v 23. It is used to indicate Jesus' lack of confidence in these believers based on His supernatural knowledge of their level of commitment. Nothing explicit is said about their salvation experience. If it is assumed they were genuinely saved, Jesus did not want to commit Himself in the sense of further disclosure and an intimate relationship with them which is conditioned upon obedience and full confession of faith (14:23; 15:14-15). The immature commitment of "untrustworthy believers" is a subtle motif in John (9:22; 12:42-43; 19:38).²¹ It simply makes more sense to interpret the unclear clause, "Jesus did not commit Himself to them" in light of the clearer language of "believed in His name." Jesus would not reveal more of Himself to those not fully confessing Him.

John 8:30-31

Again, a clear statement about saving faith is doubted by some because of what follows. Though v 30 says, "many believed in Him," using the clear *pisteu) eis* construction, v 31 refers to them as "those Jews who believed Him" with the *pisteu)* construction lacking a preposition. Also, the condition for discipleship given in v 31 is equated with salvation and it is claimed the hostility of these false believers continues (vv 33 ff.) and Jesus calls them "children of the devil" (v 44).

As for the first argument, we have already shown how *pisteu)* without the preposition does not prove faith is inadequate for salvation. The immediate context (v 24) verifies that salvation can be expressed by *pisteu)* without the preposition.

Second, the condition for discipleship in v 31 should not be construed as an admonition to unbelievers. The opposite is indicated by the emphatic pronoun *hymeis*, which distinguishes the believing Jews from the rest of the Jews who oppose Jesus. Besides, Jesus does not admonish these believers to *enter* His word, but to *abide* or *continue* in it. The aorist subjunctive "if you abide" indicates a difference among the believers, as does the qualifier *al}ths*, "indeed". These who are assumed to be in His word through faith are now given the condition of abiding for further knowledge of the truth and freedom in Christ. Elsewhere in John, intimate discipleship is conditioned on love and obedience (e.g., 13:35; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:4, 7, 10, 14).

Third, the hostile objections of v 33 ff reflect the continuing hostility of the unbelieving Jews, a major motif of this section. In v 33 the abrupt change of tone from vv 30-31 resumes this motif, making it unnecessary to identify the speakers; the Jews had raised objections from the start of the dialogue (vv 13, 19, 22, 25). John's commentary in v 30 is inserted before Jesus' remarks to notify the reader of a change of focus by Christ before the opposition resumes in v 33. It is characteristic of John to insert these editorial explanations (cf. vv 27-28). The objection of v 33 is totally out of character with the inclination of those mentioned in vv 30-32, as is also the declaration that those opposing Christ are children of the devil (v 44).

Saving faith is the most reasonable way to understand this passage. Such an interpretation prevents Christ, who says in v 45, "you do not believe Me," from contradicting John in vv 30-31 who said they both "believed in Him" and "believed Him." It is certainly better than calling these people "unbelieving believers."

Endnotes

*This paper was originally presented at the 1995 Evangelical Theological Society Conference in Philadelphia, PA The original title was "The Contribution of John's Gospel to the Salvation Controversy. Ed.

¹ Carl F. H. Henry, "A Doctrine in Crisis," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (March 1995), 57-65.

² See Moisés Silva, "Approaching the Fourth Gospel," *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (1988), 25. A later date is a common conclusion, notwithstanding J. A. T. Robinson's earlier dating argued in *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976) and *The Priority of John*, ed. J. F. Coakley (London: SCM 1995). Carson's date is AD 80-85. See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 85-86.

³ See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 350 n. 43, 365, 447, and C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1953), 345.

⁴ Whether the present or aorist tense of πιστευ{ is taken in 20:31, the evangelistic intent is preserved. See Silva, 22, and D. A. Carson, "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987), 640.

⁵ Carson, "Purpose," 648.

⁶ Dodd, 149; Rudolf Bultmann, "Zaw," *TDNT*, 2:870.

⁷ Carson, "Purpose," 649-50. He shows how chapters 13-17 can support an evangelistic purpose, though we may not agree with his approach.

⁸ Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1980), 227.

⁹E.g., Gentry, "The Great Option," *BRR* 5:55-56; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 272; Dodd, 184.

¹⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), 494; Rudolf Bultmann, s.v. "Pisteu{" , *TDNT* 6:203; Richard Christianson, "The Soteriological Significance of *PISTEUW* in the Gospel of John," (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1987); Gordon H. Clark, *Faith and Saving Faith* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1983), 101; Elizabeth Jarvis, "The Key Term 'Believe' in the Gospel of John," *Notes on Translation* 2 (1988): 46-51; Morris, 337; E. Herbert Nygren, "Faith and Experience," *The Covenant Quarterly* 41 (August 1983): 41-42; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 1:561.

¹¹ Morris, 337; Merrill C. Tenney, "Topics from the Gospel of John, Part IV: The Growth of Belief," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (July 1968): 343.

¹² Here the NIV is quoted rather than the NKJV, which inserts the preposition "in." The NKJV following the KJV probably felt the dative allowed for the addition, as did the Jerusalem, NEB, and CEV Bible.

¹³ Nygren, 42.

¹⁴ Morris, 337.

¹⁵ John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 45-46.

¹⁶ To come *to* Christ for salvation should not be confused with come *after* Christ, which is the expression used for the commitment of following Christ in a life of discipleship. See Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23; Johannes Schneider, s.v. "Ercomai," in *TDNT* 2 (1964): 66; Wolfgang Bauder, s.v. "opisw," in *NIDNTT* 1 (1975): 492-93.

¹⁷ Westcott, 9.

¹⁸ E.g., see MacArthur's comments on the conversion of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. MacArthur, Jr., 40, 46, 54, 58. Also see Walter J. Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970; reprint, 1985), 48-49.

¹⁹ Some try to make this point from pisteuw in 2:24. See the appendix for a discussion.

²⁰ Agreeing that the rulers were saved are: J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary in the Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 2:452; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 2:487; Morris, 605. Verse 42 is introduced by a strong adversative (}omws mentoi), denoting an exception that contrasts these believers with the nation which Isaiah prophesied would not believe (12:37-41). This verse offers hope that individuals within the nation could still be saved. If they were not actually saved, the contrast is muted and made meaningless.

²¹ For an excellent development of this motif, see Zane C. Hodges, "Untrustworthy Believers-- John 2:23-25," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (April-June 1978):139-52.

John Murray also states: "Without regeneration it is morally and spiritually impossible for a person to believe in Christ, but when a person is regenerated, it is morally and spiritually impossible for that person not to believe." This means that the necessary result of a regenerate heart, a heart that is born again, must be faith – faith to receive and rest upon. Christ alone for salvation. Faith, as is the case with all the steps of salvation so far, is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8). This God-given faith leads to a turning away from sin and walking towards Jesus. The entire cosmos, now in a fallen condition because of human sin, will itself participate in the final completion of Christ's redemptive work. The curse will be removed, and all the cosmos will be restored (Rom. 8:21; Rev. Ask Pastor John. Questions and answers with John Piper. Look at the Book. Interactive Bible study with John Piper. Solid Joys. Daily devotional with John Piper. Articles Sermons Topics Books Podcasts Filter Resources By. Ask Pastor John. The second reason I think "salvation" in verse 16 refers to the final triumph of the gospel in bringing believers to eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God is that the phrase "for salvation" or "unto salvation" has this future-oriented meaning elsewhere in Paul and other New Testament writers. For example, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul says, "God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved [or for salvation], through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth." 3. Ongoing belief is the condition for this salvation. John's Gospel explicitly states that it was written to bring people to salvation. Yet its message and language does not receive preeminent treatment in the Gospel debate. When it does, its simple message is often obscured or tainted by theological baggage or presuppositions. In this article, I will discuss the purpose of John's Gospel and why it should be determinative in our discussion of the condition for salvation. Also, assuming a later date for John could posit a more mature theological expression of the Gospel and the condition for salvation related to the relevant issues of the day. These unique features should give extra weight to what John says about salvation and how it is obtained. Most helpful, however, is John's own statement of purpose.