

# SINCERITY SEEKING THE WAY TO HEAVEN

*by Benjamin Franklin*

## CHAPTER I

Sincerity, a young man of twenty-one years, awoke one morning, and soliloquized with himself thus: "I have now arrived at manhood, and feel surprised when I think that twenty-one years of my life have fled, and I have not made the first effort to seek God. I am astonished at myself that I have lived this long without God and without hope. I will remain in this condition no longer. If there is a man in this town who can show me the way to heaven, I will enter upon it before the setting of another sun. I will immediately cross the way to the residence of Mr. H., the Presiding Elder of the M. E. Church, an excellent man, who will readily show me the way to heaven."

In a few minutes our young friend was rapping at the door of Mr. H. "Walk in," responded from within. "Good morning, Mr. S.," said the good man, "I trust I see you well." "Quite well, Mr. H., in body, but I have much concern of mind. I am so alarmed when I think that twenty-one years of my life are gone, and I am not a *Christian*. I have, therefore, called upon you, as a friend, to show me what I must do to be saved."

*Honesty* — Do you desire that I should pray for you?

*Sincerity* — I am ignorant of the way of salvation. I desire you to point out what the Lord requires me to do, that I may be saved. If it is for you to pray for me, for me to pray for myself, or anything else, I am ready to do it, that I may find salvation.

*H.* — I will cheerfully pray for you, if you desire it, or do anything else in my power for you.

*S.* — Thank you, sir; truly am I grateful for your kindness. You, no doubt, realize the importance of my pursuing the proper course. I desire above all things, to proceed according to the will of the Lord. I would not, for worlds, make any mistake where the salvation of my soul is in danger. If, therefore, the Lord requires me to be prayed for, that I may obtain the forgiveness of sins, I desire it to be done.

*H.* — I am truly rejoiced, my young friend, to find that you are anxious to seek the Lord. The Savior says, “He who seeks shall find.” I trust, then, you will give up your whole heart, and never cease seeking till you find rest to your soul.

*S.* — That is now my intention; but you are aware that I am uninstructed, and do not know where or how to seek the Lord. Knowing, therefore, that you are it your business to teach “those ignorant and out of the way,” I have, with the utmost confidence, come to you, to show me what the Scriptures require me to do, that I may obtain the forgiveness of sins.

*H.* — I would advise you, my dear young friend, to seek the Lord in prayer. Give up your whole heart to the Lord, and I trust he will have mercy upon you. I would advise you to attend our prayer-meetings and the class. These are precious means of grace, through which thousands have been soundly converted to God.

*S.* — Mr. H., I have brought my Bible with me, and, if you please, turn down a leaf at the place where these instructions may be found, that I may read them when alone. I desire to proceed according to Scripture.

*H.* — I did not say that my advice was, in so many words, Scripture; but, after many years' reading and prayerful study, I give it to you as Scriptural advice.

*S.* — Of course there are Scriptures instructing ones, in my condition, how to come to God, from which you deduced this advice. Will you mark some of the places, that I may consider them when in retirement? You know it is important that I should seek according to the Scripture. I desire to proceed in such a manner as to enable me to claim the promise of God.

*H.* — Yes, sir; but you need have no fears but you proceed correctly; for prayer is so frequently enjoined in Scripture, that you cannot fail to see that it is right. Besides the Scriptures say, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

*S.* — I have no doubt that prayer is right; for I can recollect of reading of prayer in the Scriptures; but, not knowing where to find these passages, and especially

where persons seeking the salvation of their souls were commanded to pray, or be prayed for, I desire you to turn down a leaf at a few places. Is the passage you quoted, “Blessed are they who mourn, etc.,” speaking of conversion?

*H.* — I cannot say it is; but, as you are what we call a “mourner,” I thought the language applicable in your case. As to prayer, the Apostle says, “I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere.”

*S.* — If that passage speaks of conversion, and is intended for men in my condition, I desire you to mark it here in my Bible. Was it addressed to persons seeking the Lord as I am, of Christians? I am desirous to have the Scripture that relates to my condition.

*H.* — You, my dear young friend, are a seeker, and the Lord says, “I will be sought unto by prayer.” Besides, you are a *mourner*, in anguish on account of sin. It is right, therefore, that you should seek the Lord in prayer.

*S.* — No doubt you are correct. I have the utmost confidence that you will give me the proper instructions. I have heard of great numbers being converted in old times, but do not know where in the Bible to find the account of these cases. Will you, therefore, refer me to some place where the people came to the “mourner’s bench,” or the “altar of prayer,” to pray and be prayed for? I desire to be certain that I am going according to Scripture.

*H.* — My dear sir, how can you have doubts about prayer, when it is commanded in so many places in Scripture?

*S.* — I have no doubt about it, but I simply desire you to point out some of those places where we read of such great numbers being converted, that I may read for myself where such great numbers were commanded to come to the mourner's bench, the altar of prayer, to pray and be prayed for. I desire to read these passages, because there are several things about it I do not understand.

*H.* — Perhaps you are unwilling to take my word!

*S.* — Certainly, my dear sir, I am willing to take your word. If you tell me where I can find these passages, I have no doubt I shall find in them as you say.

*H.* — You seem to doubt, when I tell you that it is your duty to seek the Lord in prayer, that I am right, and, consequently, keep calling for the Scriptures where prayer is required. I am afraid you will not be converted soon, if you continue to manifest such an unwillingness to pray.

*S.* — I trust, sir, you will have patience with me. I am aware that I am ignorant, but you are able to enlighten me. Besides, I have not doubted your veracity at all. I am desirous to pray or do anything the Lord requires. But you must perceive that it is of the utmost importance that, when seeking the salvation of my soul, I should proceed according to the will of the Lord. Now, while I do not doubt that you *can* and *will* teach me correctly, and that it

is my duty to pray, there are several things in regard to it that I consider indispensable for me to know.

1. I desire to know who is commanded to pray for me.
2. I desire to know whether there is any promise that I shall be heard if I pray for myself.
3. I desire to know how often I should be prayed for, before I have the promise of pardon.

It has occurred to me that I may be required to do something else as well as pray, and I am anxious to do my whole duty. Will you, therefore, point out to me those passages where such great numbers are said to have been converted?

*H.* — If you are not willing to use the means of grace which I recommend, and which have provided a blessing to so many thousand souls, I fear, sir, that I cannot be of any service to you.

*S.* — I am perfectly willing to use any means of grace, and desirous to do so, required in the Scriptures. But I am anxious to use the means of grace according to Scripture. Therefore, I desire you refer me to those Scriptures which give us an account of so many thousands using the means of grace, that I might proceed as they did.

*H.* — I presume, sir, that you are acquainted with our practice with those who seek salvation; and if you believe in our way, and will go with us, we will do you all the

good and give you all the assistance in our power; but if you have no confidence in us, we can do you no good.

*S.* — I have the utmost confidence in you; but you have occasionally exhorted us toward the Scriptures, and I cannot understand why you refuse to refer me to those passages which speak of the conversion of such vast numbers, that I may read for myself where they were commanded to pray and be prayed for, and whatever else they were commanded to do, and do the same. You believe they were converted right, I presume?

*H.* — Certainly they were.

*S.* — Please then, sir, refer me to the passages, as I must now leave, that I may reflect upon them till I see you again.

*H.* — I would advise you to read the Psalms of David, and attend our prayer-meeting on next Thursday night.

*S.* — I will do so. Good-by.

## CHAPTER II

According to promise, our young friend, Sincerity, read the Psalms of David through, and attended the prayer-meeting on Thursday night following the time of the preceding conversation. In the place of the prayer-meeting, (as Mr. Honesty, the Presiding Elder, had ex-

pected), he found the church in the midst of a protracted meeting. He said to himself, "I'm rejoiced to find such a meeting as this in progress, for I shall have the way to heaven clearly pointed out to me." On entering the house he was rejoiced to find Mr. H. in the pulpit, reading the following words, "He who seeks shall find." "What precious words to me," said young Sincerity to himself. "I will then seek the Lord with all my heart."

Mr. H. divided his discourse as follows:

1. To show that it is the duty of all to seek.
2. That the way is plain.
3. That the promise is unequivocal — that all who seek shall find.

Upon each of these heads he discoursed as follows:

1. It is the duty of all to seek the Lord. This is sustained by the clear language of Scripture: "He hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth, that they should *seek the Lord*, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." Again: "I will be sought unto by prayer." Thus we have shown, from God's written word, that all are commanded to seek the Lord.
2. The way is plain. This is proved by the word of the Lord. The prophet says, "The way is plain, that the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein." The gospel was to be a lamp to our path,



which shows that the path was to be very plain. Thus you discover the way is plain, so that man is left without excuse.

3. The promise is unequivocal. “To him who asks, it shall be given, to him who knocks it shall be opened; he who seeks shall find.” And again, “He who cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” “Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.” “Whosoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely.”

Having now proved from God’s written word...

1. That is is the duty of all to seek.
2. That the way is plain.
3. That the promise is unequivocal — that they who seek shall find — the duty of all is manifest.

What then must be the perdition of those who refuse to seek God! Let me exhort you, then, to haste, as for life, to the altar of prayer, and seek God while it is called to-day. Come, now, all things are ready; come, and give us your hand, and we will do you good.

At the conclusion an invitation was given, and a number of persons rushed to the altar and fell upon their knees. But our young friend, Sincerity, kept his seat in the middle of the house, and showed, from his countenance, that deep trouble was upon his heart. He sat still, apparently in deep meditation, during some two hours, while the usual exercises of a mourners’ bench scene transpired, and, at the close, withdrew in great sadness. As he walked

away, he said to himself, "I am afraid this matter of becoming a Christian is a dark subject. The more I think about it the thicker the gloom. What does it avail to hear a man argue that the way is *plain*, who does not show me this very plain way. I will go to the residence of Mr. Honesty and have another conversation." In a few moments he raps at the door. "Walk in," responded from within. "Good evening, Mr. S.; I am happy to see you, and was greatly rejoiced to see you at our meeting to-night. Have you read the Psalms of David?" said Mr. H.

*Sincerity* — Yes, sir, and find them extremely interesting, but could not find, as I expected, the way pointed out for me to become a Christian.

*Honesty* — I labored to point out that to you in my discourse to-night. I hope I have satisfied you in regard to that matter.

*S.* — I am sorry to be compelled to say, Mr. H., that you shed no light on the main difficulty with me. I was satisfied before that it was my duty to seek God, and I had supposed, as you contended, that the way was plain. But, from all you have said, I could not see that you pointed out any way to come.

*H.* — Did you not see how those others came?

*S.* — Yes, sir, I saw how they came to the mourner's bench, but I did not see or hear any Scripture, as I hoped to do, requiring them to come in that way. If you had shown the Scripture requiring such procedure, I would have been ready, at any moment, to have done as they

did. But seeing these come as they did, and observing the whole procedure, has involved my mind in such perplexities that I know not what to do.

*H.* — I don't see anything to perplex you, unless it is your own unbelief.

*S.* — It may be unbelief for anything I know, but so it is. I am a miserable being and hoped that you might relieve me. I cannot rest in this condition.

*H.* — I cannot relieve you unless I know your difficulty. I trust, however, it is the work of conviction you feel, and, if so, I hope it may progress to complete regeneration.

*S.* — My difficulty is this: you argued that it was the sinner's duty to seek; that the way was plain; and that those who seek *shall find*. A large number came forward *seeking* and inquired what they should do to be saved. I anxiously listened to hear you tell them what to do. I heard the directions you gave them, and saw them do what you told them to do, in every particular, as it appeared to me, with the deepest anxiety. Am I not right? Did they not seek according to your directions?

*H.* — They did, and I think did right in so doing. You should have done the same.

*S.* — Well, sir, here is my difficulty: After they had sought according to your directions, had done all you directed, you recollect that you passed along among them, and inquired of them personally, after which you arose

and reported that not one of them had got religion! Now I could not understand this. It was their duty to seek. You said the way was plain, and insisted upon the unequivocal promise, "They who seek shall find." These persons *did* seek, but you said, *did not find*. How is this?

*H.* — Perhaps they may find peace in their souls tomorrow night.

*S.* — My dear sir, am I in all this anxiety, and are all these persons, in their deep and intense solicitude, as I saw them tonight, to depend on "*perhaps*" for the salvation of the soul? If this is where I am to be left, I am in a worse condition than if I had never heard the gospel.

*H.* — My young friend, you are entirely too impatient. I was a seeker six months before the Lord spoke peace to my soul. I have known many to seek for years, and not find peace with God. In some instances, I have known persons to join on trial, and seek as high as ten, fifteen, and in some few instances, as high as twenty years, without finding.

*S.* — And yet you tell them the *way is plain*, and they that *seek shall find*. Alas! for your *plain way*, and your *Bible promises*, if a man may seek fifteen or twenty years and not find!

*H.* — Young man, I see that you have no adequate conception of Christianity.

*S.* — No, sir, I perceive I have not, and what is more mortifying than all, is that I am not likely to have any ad-

equate understanding of the subject; for nothing but clouds of gloom and darkness rise before me. Am I to have no Scriptural directions to guide me? Is there no way laid down in the Bible, by which I can come to the Lord?

*H.* — I do not say that you must seek as great a length of time as some I have mentioned — many get through much sooner. You may get through in a week, two weeks, or six months. You might get religion the first time you came to the mourner's bench. You should not despair nor become impatient.

*S.* — But, my dear sir, if the way is so plain, as you have represented, and we have the promise that they who *seek shall find*, how is it that you suspend the whole matter in doubt, saying I “may get religion,” on the first application, the second, etc.? Is there no definite place where I can come to the unequivocal promise of God?

*H.* — I have already shown you the promise; and, if you have any faith, you cannot doubt the Lord's promise; but you must wait for the Lord's own good time.

*S.* — Does not the Scripture say, “*Now* is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation,” some place? Does it not say, “*To-day*, if you will hear his voice,” etc? Did not many thousands anciently come to the Lord in a single day?

*H.* — There are such passages as you refer to, and many did come, and obtain peace with God in a single day in olden times, but it is not so now.

S. — Why is it not so now? Who has changed the order?

H. — Times have changed. The Scriptures say,—I—I—If you desire to go with us, we will do all for you we *can*; but, with your notions, I can do but little for you.

S. — I have no notions, know nothing about what is right, but wish you would show me how so many turned to the Lord in a day. Good night.

### CHAPTER III

After the conversation with Mr. H. in the previous chapter, our young friend, Sincerity, retired to his sleeping apartment, but not to sleep. He laid himself upon his bed, and soliloquized as follows:

“I see that I am awfully deluded. I had supposed it was a very plain matter to become a Christian, and, therefore, indifferently put off this important work, till, in all probability, a majority of my days are numbered. I am perfectly astonished and overwhelmed to find that now I am anxious to seek the salvation of my soul and this matter appears involved in obscurity. Is it possible that the salvation of the world is wrapped up in so much mystery and obscurity as this? Is it possible that a learned ministry, called and sent of God to preach the gospel, can throw no clearer light upon the subject than my friend, Mr. H., has given me? I supposed, when he advised me to read the

Psalms of David, that I should there find the account of the conversion of those vast multitudes of whom I had heard the preachers speak so frequently, and *how* they were converted, but, to my utter astonishment I found nothing in regard to these matters, nor anything showing how I might become a disciple of Christ, I am equally astonished, that now I am resolved to read the Bible through, and have read the five books of Moses, I have been unable to find anything relating directly to myself, or showing me the way to heaven. I found these ancient records filled with matters of great interest; but how am I to know the way to heaven from these lengthy records of antiquity?

“I am perfectly confounded, and know not what to do. It is certainly true that I am a sinner, and must be lost if I am not pardoned. I am equally certain that Christ is the Lord and Redeemer of men; and that he invites all to come to him is equally true. Why is it, then, that no way is pointed out by which to come? Would the Lord invite men to come to him, knowing that they would be lost if they did not come, and yet point out no way to come? He certainly would not. He could not do this, and then declare the way so plain that the “wayfaring men, though simpletons, need not err therein;” nor could he, if no way is pointed out, say that he “who seeks shall find.” Why is it, then, that I cannot find the way? I certainly could see the way if it had been pointed out to me. I certainly desire to find the way, and know the truth. I cannot see, then, why I should be left in this state of despondency.

“I cannot understand Mr. H. He has always appeared to me to be a good man, and I have tried to treat him kindly. Yet he appeared to speak once or twice, in our

conversation, as though he thought I was unhande'd. I cannot see why he should be unwilling to refer me to the passages that speak of the mourners coming forward to pray and be prayed for. I recollect that he would not refer me to the place where I could find an account of the conversion of such vast multitudes. It appeared to me rational, as I desired to come to the Lord, to read the accounts of such vast numbers coming, and see for myself how they came. Why, then, did he evade, and fail to point out to me those passages? He certainly knew where they were. I cannot understand this.”

Such were the meditations of Sincerity, after his retirement. Early in the morning, Mr. H. rapped at his door. “Good morning,” said Mr. H., “how do you do this morning?”

*S.* — My general health is good, but I could not rest last night. I am in much anxiety and greatly confounded in regard to my salvation. I was surprised and confounded, Mr. H., when you failed to point out to me, from the Scriptures, how I should come to the Lord. Can you, my dear sir, give me the source to which I am to apply for the evidence of pardon?

*H.* — You must have the evidence of pardon within.

*S.* — How am I to know that it is within?

*H.* — You must *feel* that your sins are forgiven.

*S.* — What kind of feelings must I have, as an evidence of the pardon of sin?



*H.* — Good feelings — joyful feelings, as a matter of course. You must feel that your load of guilt is gone, and that the Lord has spoken peace to your soul.

*S.* — And that is the evidence of pardon!

*H.* — Yes, sir. When the Lord converted my soul, it appeared to me that a mountain had been taken off of me. It appeared to me that all nature changed, and that all the trees, the green fields, the fowls of heaven, and the fish of the sea — that everything in heaven and upon earth, praised God, and I was enabled to say, “I know that my Redeemer lives,” and that “Jesus has power on earth to forgive sins.” This, sir, is the evidence of pardon — the witness in myself that I am a child of God.

*S.* — What is the cause of your rejoicing?

*H.* — Because I have got religion, thank God!

*S.* — What is the evidence that you have got religion?

*H.* — My joyful feelings.

*S.* — Is that the way that matter stands in the Bible?

*H.* — My young friend, I am afraid you are skeptical. It appears to me that you are inclined to doubts. I would advise you to pray that you may be delivered from unbelief. The religion I have, of course, is Scriptural.

*S.* — I may be skeptical, but I do not think I am. At all events, I desire to believe and desire to be a Christian.

But I cannot see how you make my inquiry, whether you make feeling the result of religion, or religion the result of feeling, an indication that I am skeptical. I simply desired to know whether feeling is the Scriptural evidence of pardon.

*H.* — My dear young friend, I must say to you candidly, that I have, from our first conversation, feared that you are skeptical, but shall be happy to find that you are not. But that *feeling* is the evidence of pardon, is manifest both from Scripture and reason. Seek the Lord, that you may find the salvation of your soul, and feel the power of pardoning love. I must see those persons who came to the mourner's bench last night, and see if they have found peace with God. Come to meeting to-night. Good-by.

While Sincerity was reflecting on this conversation, a Romanist came in, to whom he said, "Where do you find Scripture to prove that the priests can forgive sins?"

*Romanist* — I do not ask for Scripture to prove that the priests can forgive sins; I know that the priests can forgive sins.

*Sincerity* — How do you know it?

*R.* — How do I know that the priests can forgive sins? Why, sir, when I am laden and pressed down with my numerous sins, I go to the priest and humbly confess — unbosom my whole soul to him, and the holy father forgives me. I know that I am pardoned, because I feel that the great burden — my oppressive load of guilt — is gone. I feel that I am delivered, and return to my home happy.

S. — But where is the Scripture for that?

R. — What need have I for Scripture? Don't I know when I am pardoned, when I *feel* that my load of sin and guilt is gone?

After the Romanist had gone, our young friend said to himself: "Is it possible that Romanists have the same evidence of pardon as other people? I am unable to understand how this is. If *feeling* is the evidence of pardon, for anything I can see to the contrary, this Romanist has proved that a priest can pardon him, just as Mr. H. proved that the Lord pardoned him. Am I to have no evidence of pardon only such as a Romanist may have to prove that a priest can pardon him? Have Protestants no higher evidence of pardon than Romanists? This involves me in worse confusion than ever! Am I blinded by unbelief, as Mr. H. seems to think, or what is the matter? I am perfectly astonished at the condition of religious matters. My confusion becomes worse and worse the more I think upon the subject."

Our young friend passed along up the street, and heard a man preaching in an old, dilapidated house, with some three small windows, and he seated himself in the house. It turned out to be an Anti-Means Baptist, preaching upon the words, "Whom He will, He hardeneth," to an audience of about fifteen persons, several of whom were soundly asleep. He was pretty much through his discourse when Sincerity entered. But in summing up his discourse, he insisted "that God passed by the non-elect, made no provision for them; that Christ did not die for them; that the Lord hardened them, blinded them, sent

them strong delusions that they could not, in any event, turn to God, or be saved.”

Sincerity walked away, saying to himself, “Perhaps I am one of the non-elect and blinded. I cannot think that I am hardened, or that I am given over to believe a lie. If I know my own heart, I desire to know and believe the truth. I thought preachers were designed to enlighten the world; but if they are, I cannot understand them. I fear that I am lost!”

## CHAPTER IV

As our young friend returned home, after hearing the Calvinist Baptist, he met with a Universalist preacher in conversation with a lawyer of his acquaintance, a skeptic; when the following conversation took place:

*Lawyer* — Mr. S., what is the matter that you are following the preachers up? Are you about being deluded by the noise and pretenses of religion?

*Sincerity* — I am greatly distressed in regard to my salvation. I had supposed that religion was a very plain matter, and that one could become a Christian at any time; but the more I think about it the greater my perplexity.

*L.* — Yes, sir; and the more you try to understand it the more you will be perplexed. In my younger days I was

in the same condition with yourself. I listened to the preachers several years, but found that I could not understand them, that they disagree among themselves; and, having turned my attention to the law, I have found something tangible, and that can be acted upon, and have, therefore, concluded to leave my salvation to God. I will try and look out for myself in this world, and leave God to take care of me in the next, if there be any.

*S.* — I am inclined to think — indeed, I am compelled to admit — that so far as my experience goes, what you say about the preachers appears to be the case. But then they are good men certainly.

*L.* — I admit, freely, that they are good men. Here is our neighbor H., the presiding Elder, is a good and a self-sacrificing man. He spends his whole time in preaching, and visiting the members of his church, and, I think, only receives some three hundred dollars a year for his services, while I make a thousand a year with far less labor. Yet I have listened to him trying to point out the way of salvation, and I could see no plan or system that any man of sense could act upon, or, in other words, I could see nothing tangible that I could take hold of. Not only so, but I have seen numbers of sincere persons come to him in the church, and inquire of him what to do, and have heard him tell them to pray and be prayed for, and have seen him pray for them, and they would still go away mourning and lamenting that they were not pardoned.

*S.* — I have seen the same, and have had several private conversations with Mr. H., in which he failed to give me any satisfaction in regard to the way of salvation; and, as you say, it does appear to me that he had no plan. I

think that, though he is a good, an honest, and a sincere man, he does not understand the gospel.

*L.* — No, Mr. S., you do not apprehend the difficulty. He is, as you say, a good, an honest and sincere man, but he is deluded, and the preachers are all in the same predicament. None of them understand; and the reason is, religion is all a delusion; it has no understanding to it.

*S.* — If I thought all the preachers were as incapable of giving light as Mr. H., I should be even more miserable than I am. But it is mortifying and discouraging to me to hear you ascribe the blame to *religion itself*. My impression is, that the fault is in the incompetency of some men to set forth Christianity, and not in the obscurity in religion itself.

*L.* — There is where you are mistaken; the fault is not in the men, but in religion. If you desire to obtain relief from your despondency, you had better drive this gloomy subject from your mind. Turn your attention to your business, and try to take care of yourself, for if you do not take care of yourself, nobody will do it for you. Come over the way and let us get something to take, and not allow ourselves to fall into gloomy despondency.

*Universalist* — Mr. L., I think you have passed but a poor compliment upon religion and ministers. If you will allow me to explain to you the blessed gospel of God's universal paternity, I can show how you can find comfort to your mind, and how our mutual friend, Sincerity, may find relief from all his troubles. I see what it is, Mr. L., that has driven you, and will drive you, Mr. S., into unbe-

lief, if you are not relieved. It is the Pagan notion of “everlasting punishment” — “eternal damnation.” If you once understood the blessed doctrine of a world’s salvation, your mind would be at rest.

S. — Your idea is then, if I understand you, that the source of my distress is in a *misapprehension of mind*, and not in any real danger.

U. — I think, sir, that you are actually in a dangerous condition, but the danger is not what you fear. The only thing that will afford you relief is the blessed doctrine of a *world’s salvation*.

S. — You consider then that I am really safe, if I only knew it, and all that is necessary is to show me and our friend here, Mr. L., that we are in no danger, to make us happy.

U. — Yes, sir; that is, there is no danger of many “eternal damnation,” or “everlasting punishment,” as the orthodox teach.

L. — Did you say, sir, that the orthodox doctrine of “eternal damnation” and “everlasting punishment” is a “Pagan notion”?

U. — Yes, sir, I did, and can prove it.

L. — Well, then, sir, Jesus taught “Pagan notions,” for he used this identical language. He spoke of persons whom he declared to be in the danger of “eternal damnation,” and others whom he declared should go into “ever-

lasting punishment.” This is the teaching of your Master, and this you call “Pagan notions.” Is this the respect you show to the teachings of Jesus?

U. — These passages do not mean that — the fact is —

L. — The fact is, you do not believe your Bible any more than I do, nor do you any more honor Jesus. He says, “He who believeth not the Son, *shall not see life.*” Do you believe this?

U. — That passage means — I — I — I can prove that all shall see life, and —

L. — And, as a matter of course, that your Master did not tell the truth when He said, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life.” How is this?

U. — I can prove — I can show — the Bible says —

L. — The Bible says, that you “*strengthen the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.*” Still you will dishonor the Bible in promising the wicked life, and strengthen the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, will you?

U. — That means — I hold — I — I — if I talk any more it shall be with a man who has some sense, and not with you, sir. Good-by.



L. — You may have some sense, but there is no sense in your doctrine. Friend Sincerity, let me say to you, before we separate, that this kind of treatment from preachers has convinced me that religion is all a delusion. None of their doctrine is true. As I said before, I shall try and take care of myself in this world, and trust to God to take care of me hereafter. I must go. Good-by.

Sincerity walked along homeward, ruminating in his mind as follows: “My trouble increases upon me every day. In the place of finding any relief, new difficulties rise before me. These unfortunate men with whom I have been conversing have not one ray of light. If there is nothing better than they can present, the world is lost. Is it possible that people in general have no better understanding in regard to these matters than those with whom I have conversed? I am perfectly confounded! Can it be that Mr. L. is right, and that religion is all a delusion? I hope he is not, for then all must be darkness and gloom. In this case, we must live in uncertainty, and die in doubt. The thought of giving up all hope of finding any better instruction is insupportable. I cannot endure it. I will go home and read my Bible through, at all events. I am wretched now, and certainly should be miserable to die in this condition. I have now found four classes of men, and neither of them have afforded me the least satisfaction.

1. Mr. H. insists upon the necessity of seeking the Lord. In this, he has satisfied me, that he is right; but he has shown me no directions from the Bible, pointing me the way to the Lord.

2. The Calvinist Baptist insists that I can do nothing, and that if I am of the non-elect, I never can come to the Lord, no matter how I seek. This I do not believe, for the Lord would not require me to seek him, knowing that I could do nothing.
3. My neighbor, the lawyer, has become disgusted with the whole matter, and has resolved to engross his mind with the affairs of the world, and leave the result with God, believing that religion is all a delusion.
4. As to this Universalist preacher, he is trying to satisfy his own mind, and the minds of others, with the notion that man is safe without any conversion, for there is no danger of being lost, as there is no hell or lake of fire. But this most ridiculous, absurd, and blasphemous doctrine gives the lie to the whole Bible, for its whole spirit is, "except ye repent, ye shall perish."

In my opinion, these latter three doctrines, if they are doctrines, are useless, as neither proposes to make the world any better, or do anything for the world. I could see the propriety in the position of Mr. H., if he could show what the Scriptures required me to do. But I must read my Bible through, and see if I can find nothing better.

This is a sample of the material contained in  
*Sincerity and the Way to Heaven: The Story of a Young Man  
Searching for the Truth in a World of Religious Confusion*  
by Benjamin Franklin and Daniel Sommer

To order single copies, visit:  
[store.gospelarmory.com/product/sincerity/](http://store.gospelarmory.com/product/sincerity/)

To place a bulk order (10 or more copies)  
and receive a discount, visit:  
[www.gospelarmory.com/bulk/](http://www.gospelarmory.com/bulk/)

Thank you!

