1 Timothy 2:4 (Charles Henry Mackintosh) 54486

Christian Truth: Volume 3, God's Sovereignity and Man's Responsibility (2:4)

The rendering of 1 Tim. 2:4 ("Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth") in our excellent authorized version, is perfectly correct. Your difficulty arises from your not seeing the immense difference between theology and the heart of God. Theology consists of the conclusions of men's minds drawn from the facts of Scripture; and you may constantly find souls harassed and perplexed by the dogmas of conflicting schools of theology instead of resting, in childlike simplicity, upon the plain statements of the Word of God. In point of fact, what is called the high school of doctrine is right in what it holds, and wrong in what it rejects; and on the other hand, the low school of doctrine is right in what it holds, and wrong in what it rejects. The former holds predestination, election, divine sovereignty, and the eternal security of all true believers; and herein it is right. But it denies the full offer of salvation to all men, and human responsibility; and herein it is wrong. The low school of doctrine holds the freeness and fullness of salvation, and the moral responsibility of the sinner; and herein it is right. But it denies the sovereignty of divine grace and the security of the believer; and herein it is wrong.

You will bear in mind, dear friend, that when we use the terms "high school" and "low school," we do not at all mean to give offense; far from it; we merely speak of things as they are. For ourselves, we desire to be taught exclusively by Scripture, and not by any school of divinity. We are quite sure God never meant to puzzle, to repulse, or to discourage poor souls—no never. God is love; His grace has brought salvation unto all. He wills not the death of a sinner. He wills not "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Such is His gracious aspect toward all; hence, if any perish, it is not in pursuance of the will of God.

But there is another side to this great question. Man is responsible. What mean those touching words of the weeping Savior, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And again, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." Do you not see, dear friend, that Scripture as distinctly teaches divine sovereignty as it teaches human responsibility—and the permanency of salvation as distinctly as its freeness? Are we called upon to reconcile these things? No; they are reconciled by God Himself inasmuch as they are taught in His holy Word; we are only to bow our heads in believing and adoring reverence. It is a great matter to make one's escape from the labyrinths of systematic theology and yield ourselves to the formative power of the whole truth of God. We shall merely add, ere we close this reply, that Scripture clearly teaches the doctrine of election, but sedulously excludes the repulsive doctrine of reprobation. It teaches that all who reach heaven will have to thank God for it; and all who find their place in hell will have to blame themselves.