

# Foolish Questions Are Not Apologetic Tools

*An Essay By Earl Jackson*

Romans 14:1...*Doubtful Disputations*

Should the Christian apologist or preacher engage in asking or answering questions that could potentially undermine the Christian Faith?

This is not an issue which may at first seem irrelevant to apologetics. In fact it is a huge problem. First I will give you an example of one such question that I hear often, or read in sermons and articles frequently. It is the question of Contradictions within the Bible.

Do these verses ( and then a list is give) contradict these verses (and then a seemingly contradictory list of verse is given)?

A pastor friend wrote me recently, and sent me a copy of an article that He had prepared for his blog. He wanted my opinion. This essay contains first his question and part of His article, and then it contains my answer to Him. I have re-written some of this, to make the issues clear, but you should get the drift, and you should also learn why preachers, or defenders of the faith, should never articulate doubtful disputations, doubtful questions, or foolish questions as part of their teaching or apologetics ministry. **Here's the question His article raised.**

## Does the Bible Contradict Itself?

*Does God want everybody to be saved -- or not?*

Below you will find some scriptures from the Bible that may seem to be contradictory. Are they? Perhaps you may want to reply to this email with your own opinion or conviction about them. Your input will be most welcome.

### GOD WANTS EVERYONE TO BE SAVED

**I Timothy 2:4** - "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

**I Timothy 4:10** - "...because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe."

**Romans 10:1**- "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

### GOD INTENDS TO SAVE ONLY SOME PEOPLE:

**John 17:1-2** - "Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify

thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

**John 6:37** - "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

**Acts 13:48** - "And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord. And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

**Ephesians 1:4-5** - "...according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will..."

How about sending a reply to this? Is it OK if I print it?

Notice carefully the question: "Does the Bible Contradict itself?" This probably seems like a valid question, nothing out of the ordinary to you, something perhaps you have raised even yourself in your teaching and preaching when verses appear in disharmony. But questions like this are in fact foolish questions, and they should never be broached by a man of God who is trying to defend or proclaim the Christian faith and message. Here's my answer, which shows why foolish questions should never be used in apologetics or preaching.

If you think the question is valid, and is not a foolish question, please suspend your judgments till you have read my response. Some questions should never be asked, or answered by Christian ministers. The one my friend raised above, is just one such question. Here's my answer:

I don't see any contradiction in the verses you presented. But I do have a problem asking a question like the one you pose. "Does the Bible contradict itself?" The question simply should never be asked, by a preacher of righteousness and truth, and I'll show you why.

God can desire the salvation of all without actually saving all. He is the "Savior of All" in a sense that is different from those who believe. That is what is meant by the distinction in 1Tim 4:10..."Especially of those who believe". The verse does not just indicate that Christ in some sense is "the Savior of all men". You can't stop there. It indicates that he is "Specially the Savior of some (those who believe)" in a clearly different sense. Both parts of the verse are equal. Both parts of the verse answer to your question "is there a contradiction?" This verse explains why there is no contradiction. But there is never a contradiction. Is there? Why would you ask such a question? God can be the Savior of all and the Savior of some at the same time. He is God. Isn't He? It is not impossible for Him. Nothing is impossible for God, even though we have puny brains that cannot get our minds wrapped around it. God is the sum of all perfections, and men do not have to understand that. He is who He is, without our approval or our perception of Him. So why raise questions that cast doubt on Him or His word?

"God so loved the world (universal general language) that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth (specific restrictive language)", expresses the exact same concept. God can genuinely love the world that he does not save. Can't He? He can love the world even when He extends salvation in a specific and restrictive sense only to those who believe. Implying or making a contradiction in these things, makes a contradiction in God Himself. We know that God is self-consistent even though we may be inconsistent, and have trouble comprehending it. All doctrines, thoughts or questions, that would impinge on the veracity of God must be rejected as soon as they are raised. That means your question is not a valid one, because it implies the possibility that God is schizophrenic? Any question that implies a problem in God (?) or with God's Word (?), is the kind of question that a believer should never raise. It's foolish because "the fool says in his heart there is no God". The fool uses questions like this to dispute the veracity of God, and to thus attempt to disprove Him. We give the fool fuel for his fire when we raise questions like this in our apologetics. It ought never to be done. If a fool could use it to potentially argue against God or the Bible (?) that makes it a foolish question, and believers are forbidden from asking foolish questions. (Look up 2Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9;

2Tim. 2:14,16; 1Tim. 1:4 for the commands forbidding foolish questions).

If we ask any question, in front of the world, that implies that there might possibly be a problem with God (?), or a problem with His word (?), we undermine the Christian faith which we are trying to defend. Even if our intentions are most noble and good, the effect of raising doubtful questions harms the cause of Christ and truth.

I hear preachers raising questions about the Bible and giving answers all the time. They set up straw men, and raise these sorts of questions so that when they give the brilliant answer, they might appear wise unto all. Sometimes they raise the question because they actually don't know the answer themselves. I can't comprehend why they would not know? But that is a whole different problem. Some questions are valid, and are not foolish. But other questions imply that there possibly could be a problem with God or His Word. Those questions should never be raised by us. And if an unbeliever raises them they should never be answered by us, either. We should never acknowledge an invalid question. Because invalid questions spring from invalid motives and create invalid responses. We cannot in any way acknowledge the possibility of defects with God or His word, because to do so adds credence and credibility to the atheistic reasoning of humanism. There are no problems with God or His word, and we should always avoid implying that there might be (?) or that there could be(?). We must ignore questions that imply such things. They are fools questions, not the questions of God's people. There is no possibility (not even remotely) that God is an idiot. Nor is He schizophrenic. That means no contradictions. No possibility of contradictions. No idea of contradiction. No inconsistencies. EVER! I never allow these sorts of questions in my teaching, and I never bring them up in my preaching. My job is to magnify the Lord, and glorify His name and exalt everything about Him. Questions like this gender strife, and exalt the teacher. But they do not exalt God. How does it exalt God to imply that there might possibly be, or could possibly be, a contradiction within the verses of His word? It creates confusion, and doubt, and does absolutely nothing to strengthen the Christian faith. That's my opinion. That's how I approach "doubtful disputations" (Rom. 14:1).

What if somebody looks at your answer to the supposed contradiction that you have pointed out, but they don't agree with your answer and your perspective? What happens when they say; *"Oh I don't agree with the solution here. There really is a contradiction! In fact it proves, that the Bible is full of contradictions! I've been saying that right along. I'm going to use this in my next class at the university on anti-theistic arguments. I'm so glad that preacher has pointed out another flaw in the Bible."* What have done here by raising your question? You have effectively re-enforced the unbelievers idea that God and the Bible are inconsistent pieces of trash. Is that what Christian ministers and apologists should be doing? We should never either knowingly or unknowingly re-enforce ideas which could possibly strengthen men in their hatred of God. That is neither preaching, nor is it teaching.

The only reason I am giving you my opinion on this, is because at the bottom of your email you wrote "How about sending a reply to this? Is it OK if I print it?" You have to decide that for yourself. If you think asking questions that imply there might be contradictions in God's word is profitable (?), and is what God wants you to do (?), then do it. I think they raise unnecessary doubts and create questions where none may actually exist in the mind of the readers. I try never to do that, because it is

counterproductive to maintaining a high level of actual Christian thinking and apologetics. I don't do that. But you do whatever you feel is right for you. God bless you, and thanks for asking for my opinion.

There you have it... a foolish question (?) and an intelligent Christian response. I think I have shown that asking questions which may be interpreted in such a way so as to bring reproach on God or the Bible, should never be asked by any Christian who is trying to glorify through teaching the Bible.

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