

A photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, green, orange, and red. The water below reflects these colors, creating a shimmering effect. The text is centered and reads:

**MY HEART IS IN
THE RIGHT PLACE**

"GOD KNOWS MY HEART"

- Is Christianity just an "either/or" between empty, superficial obedience and heartfelt, emotionally-satisfying unorthodoxy? Perhaps it's a result of poor Bible study (or a lack of it altogether) that has led to such a gross misrepresentation of what our faith is supposed to be and how we should express it.
- Always be wary of such dramatic dichotomies and seek a possible "third option". Don't let people suck you in to a line of reasoning that invariably leads to an incomplete or imprecise answer.

IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?

- I wonder if the Bible even supports the claim that the heart can be used to justify false practices or beliefs?
- Psalm 15:1-2
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Romans 6:17
- John 14:15
- 1 John 2:1-6
- Having a heart for God actually promotes increased sensitivity to His word and will.

“BUT WHAT ABOUT PASSAGES LIKE HOSEA 6:6?”

Nobody is denying that Israel failed miserably to give their heart to God. Their story is a testament to man’s tendency toward superficial religion and empty ritual. Yet even in a book like Hosea the context clarifies just what was so displeasing to God. Hosea 4:6, 8:1, 8:12, 14:9 all indicate that disobedience to the precepts and commandments of God greatly contributed to the spiritual disease that permeated their collective heart.

THE "PHARISEE ARGUMENT"

- *"You're just being a Pharisee for insisting on sound doctrine through grammar and intellectual arguments. You're missing the spirit of the Bible."*
- I've heard this argument used when I insist on precise interpretation of words such as baptism, singing, repentance, adultery, fellowship, covenant, bishop/elder, and many others.
- Just what exactly were the Pharisees doing that Jesus disapproved of, anyway?

THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME

The Pharisees placed their traditions ahead of scripture whenever there was a conflict. In doing so, they actually violated some pretty fundamental commands such as honoring father and mother (Matthew 15:6) and practicing justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23). They were incredibly self-assured and self-righteous and believed their traditions elevated them above the common believer (Luke 18:9). They failed to honor truth when it was presented plainly to them (Matt. 21:27).

ISAIAH 29:13-14

- Is there something to be said about empty religion based on routine? Of course! If our singing has become lackluster, however, that's not an indication that we should reinterpret (incorrectly, I should add) the very meaning of passages like Ephesians 5:19 or Colossians 3:16.
- People wrongly assume that if something is not working right, then it is the *form* that should be altered, and the *heart* will follow. They throw out the baby with the bathwater by insisting that unbiblical innovation is the solution for heartless worship.

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

- The solution is to change the heart, not the doctrine; to emphasize obedience from within and not just without (Psalm 119:9-11).
- If we're driving people away because of our reliance on form only and not substance, that's on us! Remember what Jesus had to say to the Ephesians in Revelation 2:2ff.
- A generation of young Christians is being sold on the idea of showy, emotional, insubstantial religion because they believe their parents and grandparents are stuck in an unsatisfying doctrinal rut. Win their souls by your good examples (2 Timothy 1:3-6, 13-14).

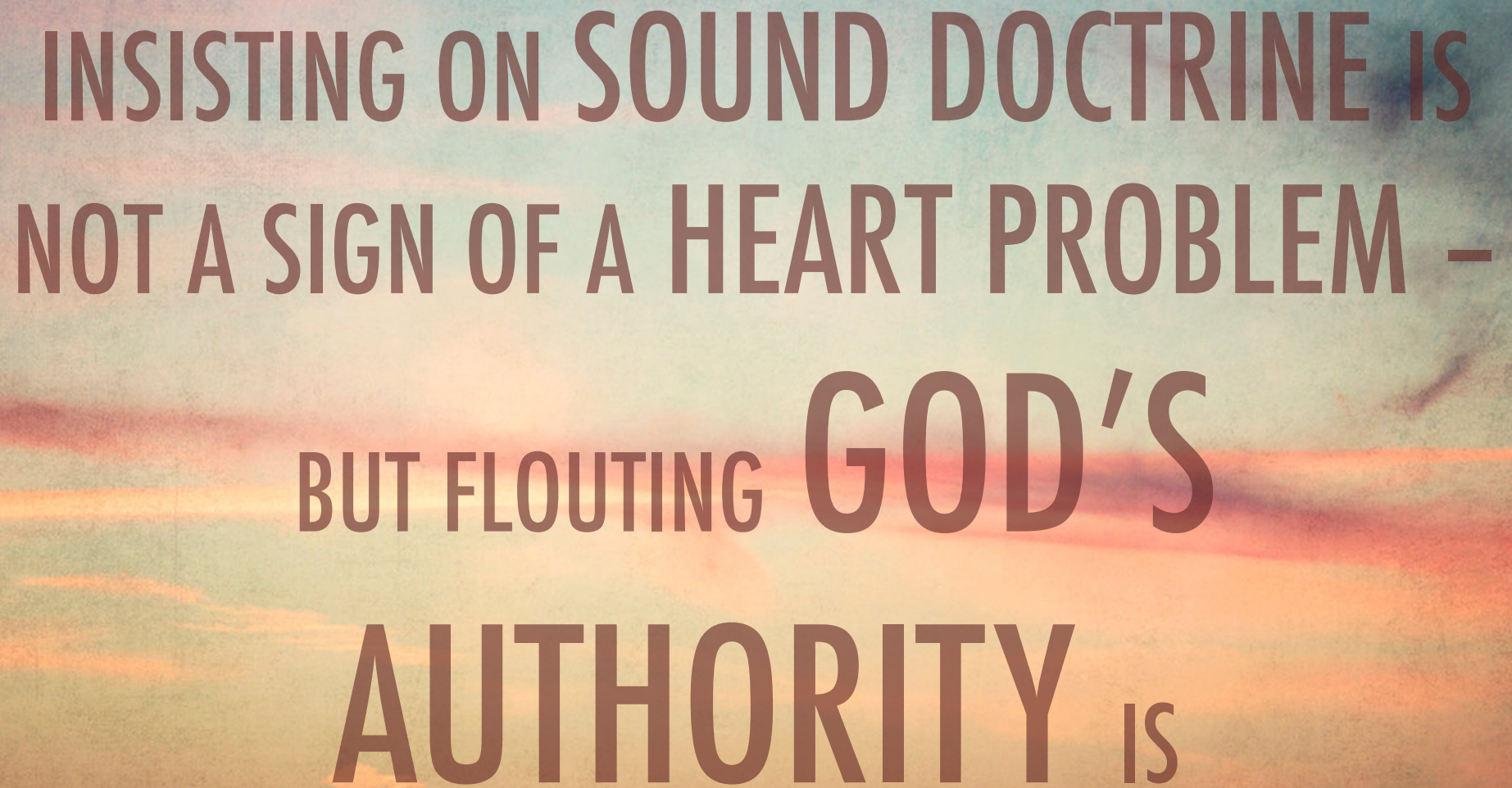
CRAVINGS

I get the impression from some that their focus on the heart is little more than a smokescreen for justifying their personal preferences and physical cravings. "God knows my heart, therefore..." living in a sexual sin is okay because you love somebody, altering worship to suit preferences or society's customs is called being "accessible to the unchurched", and accepting anybody's personal story of salvation (no matter how unbiblical) is just an expansion of my understanding of God's grace.



PHILIPPIANS

3:17-19



INSISTING ON SOUND DOCTRINE IS
NOT A SIGN OF A HEART PROBLEM –
BUT FLOUTING **GOD'S**
AUTHORITY IS