

## SUNDAY MORNING (October 28<sup>th</sup>) • Counterfeit Gospels

### The Therapeutic Gospel

A woman comes into an emergency room, coughing uncontrollably. As one of the doctors eventually talks with her, he finds out that she's been a smoker for decades. He prescribes some medicine that will temporarily relieve the worst of her coughing, but he tells her that the cough will not completely go away as long as she continues smoking. A few weeks later, the lady comes back, complaining that the medicine is no longer working. What will the doctor say? "I'm only addressing your symptom. The real problem is that you continue to damage your lungs."

Every doctor knows that getting the diagnosis right is vitally important for giving the right prescription. It isn't enough to treat symptoms; doctors must identify the root cause of a patient's problem. As Christians, we should be no less vigilant in searching the Scriptures for the true diagnosis of our spiritual state.

The "therapeutic gospel" answers a key question like, *What are we here for?* by pointing to our desire for personal happiness. Another important question, *What has gone wrong?* is answered by pointing to our feelings of emptiness. Sin is recast as an obstacle to finding happiness. It's whatever gets in the way of our becoming all that we ought to be. God wants to patch up the hole in our hearts, and he does this by sending Jesus to fill our hearts with love to bless our pursuit of happiness. The church is then transformed into a place to help people find personal fulfillment.

- Is the "therapeutic gospel" a counterfeit gospel? If so, in what ways?
- Why is the "therapeutic gospel" so attractive and, as a result, so popular?

Consider how, whenever the "therapeutic gospel" takes hold, certain results are bound to follow. These results leave us spiritually anemic at just the time we need to be spiritually empowered.

- Disillusionment when suffering comes. Why?
- A shrunken view of sin. Why?
- People who desire what God can give us rather than God himself. Why?

If the "therapeutic gospel" is a counterfeit, does it need to be countered? If so, in what ways?