

May 23, 2010

Pressing On

Philippians 3:12-16

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.

¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Jesus & Buddha on Happiness

Greatly disturbed by the suffering he saw in the world, 29-year-old Prince Gautama Siddhartha (563-483 BC), who was later called the Buddha (enlightened one), left his wife and young child and set out on a search for the meaning of life.

What he observed was the impermanence of the world—nothing lasted. In spite of this, people desired these impermanent things. They desired to hold on to life, health, possessions, and each other. But life, health, possessions and people pass away. Human desires would always ultimately disappoint. This, he reasoned, was the cause of human suffering.

Therefore, he concluded that if he could kill desire, if he could be tranquilly unaffected by either good or evil, his suffering would cease and he would be happy. He would be free from pain and the endless cycle of reincarnation. This was Nirvana.

It is ironic, though, that driving the Buddha's rigorous pursuit to kill his desires was one great human desire: lasting happiness.

There was also a huge, vacuous hole in the Buddha's pursuit of lasting happiness: no God. The Buddha didn't say much about God's existence because, frankly, to him God was irrelevant to human happiness. Rather, happiness was being free from desire-induced suffering and reincarnation. Happiness was the blissful end of individual existence—a sort of sweet annihilation.

How different are Jesus' answers from the Buddha's. When a rich and troubled young man, not so different from the rich and troubled young Gautama, sought out Jesus' direction for eternal happiness, Jesus replied,

You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. ([Mark 10:21](#))

Notice that Jesus *did* instruct the man to become detached from his possessions. But he did not mean a Buddhist detachment. He said it another way here:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ([Matthew 13:45](#))

The message is clear: *desire the treasure!* Desire it enough to count everything else as loss in order to gain it ([Philippians 3:8](#)).

The difference is that the Buddha wants to be desire-less and completely absorbed into the impersonal cosmos. Jesus wants us to deeply desire and be completely enthralled with the Person in whom we live and move and have our being ([Acts 17:28](#)).

That's why, in the battle against sinful desires, Jesus is so much more helpful than the Buddha. He knows that our desire for happiness is designed by God, and so is our desire for permanence. They are not evil. Here is what is evil:

Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. ([Jeremiah 2:12-13](#))

We are designed to be satisfied with the one eternal (permanent) God. Evil is when we believe that God will not satisfy us and therefore pursue happiness in something else. That's the essence of sin. And the way we fight sin is not to kill desire, but to abandon our futile desires for broken cisterns. There is no water there. Go to the Fountain!

Jesus and the Buddha agreed that pursuing ultimate happiness in transient things is futile. But they direct us to opposite solutions. The Buddha says satisfaction is treasuring no thing. Jesus says it is treasuring God. In God we get all things. In no thing we get, well, nothing.

Thanks to Jon Bloom and Desiring God Ministries

Continued...

I am interested in:

- Learning more about Island ECC
 Learning more about how to become a Christian
 Signing up for _____ (events / class / care group)

- Volunteering
 Talking to church leader
 Membership
 Baptism
 Other _____

Sharing a comment with the church leaders

Today I attended the service at:
 9.30am 11.30am 5pm

On the:
 1st Floor 2nd Floor

TELL US ABOUT YOU

Thank you for worshipping with us today! Do you have a praise item or a prayer request? Do you want to learn more about how you can get connected at Island ECC? Please take a moment to complete **both** sides of this form and place it in the offering bag, or at a designated box on the 1st or 2nd floor.

Name _____

Mobile Number _____

Email _____

Praise / Prayer _____

If my praise / prayer request is shared publicly with the congregation at a Sunday service, please keep my name anonymous.