

A mixed portrayal



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In his bibliography of Alexander, Plutarch portrays some of the positive and negative aspects in his life. This includes his personality as well as actions. He describes him as a man who possesses both bad and good characteristics. However, he is able to maintain a normative view in describing his life through provision of facts.

The life of Alexander

Alexander was a descendant of Heracles and Aeacus. He was born at the beginning of the month of Hecatombaeon. As the fate would have it, Ephesian Artemis was set on fire soon after his birth. The major reason for burning the Artemis was because the goddesses were busy bringing Alexander into this world. Indeed, Hegesis the Magnesian made an utterance concerning the burning of the Artemis, and therefore, no efforts were made to extinguish the fire. It was a sign of another disaster to come (Plutarch 275). Thus, Plutarch portrays this action as a sign of calamity that had been born in Asia. Although Magis cried aloud fearing their future, the seers viewed it at another angle; they argued that this was a sign of victory that coincided with the birth of Alexander. Therefore, the birth of Alexander was associated with victory.

Since his youth, Alexander was violent and impetuous while dealing with some matters. However, he was able to restrain himself. This made him to avoid the pleasures of his body from controlling him. Therefore, he indulged in every activity with moderation. He was always ambitious and worked hard to achieve high in life. This was the beginning of his achievement for his later years. He was courted by Philip, his father who made him to rise to fame.

Moreover, his oratory skills also contributed to his rise to power. Plutarch notes that Alexander was also a good athlete. He was a contender at the Olympic Games, where the majority of the kings were the major participants (Plutarch 227). This clearly shows his ability to effectively socialize with other people at an earlier age. On the other hand, Alexander took no interest while offering various gifts for those who participated in boxing or Pancratium. As a king, he instituted different concerts such as tragic poetry, players of flute and lyre, hunting as well as fighting with the staves. Another positive character of Alexander is that he was in good terms with other kings even at the time when he was under Philip. For instance, he entertained them while Philip was away and developed good relations with them. This made him to develop friendship with other kings. His ability to avoid asking trivial questions to the kings of Persia also made him to effectively learn about kingship. During this visitation, kings of Persia noted Alexander eager to do great things more than his father Philip.

Alexander did not crave for pleasure or wealth as it was the case with his father. His main desire was excellence and fame. He considered his success important more than anything. At a time, he thought that his success was likely to be limited by what he received. Alexander was a considerate person. For instance, he avoided squandering his father's opportunities and achievements. He preferred to receive from him a chance to advance himself (Plutarch 227). He was willing to go through struggles and wars in order to realize his ambitions. In his point of view, luxury, enjoyment and wealth would take him no where. He wanted to work for his achievements. Contrary to his father, Alexander did not get angry quickly. For instance, Philip got

angry while they were at the field trying horses and ordered them to be led away. However, Alexander encountered his father's actions. He states that, "what a horse they are losing, because, for lack of skill and courage, they cannot manage him!" (Plutarch 231) In most situations, Alexander helped his father, especially in handling of the horses. Philip sent some of the most famous philosophers and teachers to his son such as Aristotle.

At twenty, Alexander inherited the kingdom from his father. At this time, Macedonia was in a great danger of being overthrown by the neighboring kingdoms. Therefore, Alexander as the new king of Macedonia had to do something in order to restore the stability of the kingdom. In addition, there was a fear of crisis at this particular moment. His first assignment was to regain the security and safety of his people. Demosthenes treated Alexander as a boy. This made him to get angry. He decided to revenge by driving them as far as to the walls of Athens. He led his forces in a great force to fight kingdoms that were posing danger to his survival. He stripped armies from Illyrians and Triballians as far as Thessaly (Plutarch 233). One negative aspect of Alexander can be seen in this particular incident: he was acting out of anger and revenge. He wanted to show his ability and mighty to conquer and fight. Consecutively, he overran their territories in a revolt.

He engaged in frequent battles of conquest, where he captured various people. Some of them were sold to slavery, while others were slain. For instance after the battle against the Thebans, he slain about six thousand while the majority were taken as captives. Although this was a sign of success, he was acting out of anger as he wanted to show his enemies that he had absolute ability to fight and conquer them. He thought that the

Greeks would be terrified by their great loss and therefore ceases fighting them. On the other hand, Alexander did not heed to the complaints of his allies. Alexander fought for the rights of his people. For example, Thracians broke into one of the house of Tomocleia who was a woman of high repute. Some of the people plundered her properties. Their leader violated her, something that was very shameful. The leader went ahead to demand for gold and silver that the woman had. She agreed to show him the valuable possessions. Fortunately, as his tormentor, Thracians was bending over to inspect the place, she was able to come from behind and kill him (Plutarch, 225). He was taken to the king and when the king indentified her and her contributions in helping his father fight the forces in Chaeroneia, he was deeply touched and ordered that she would be left free together with her children.