

# View

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” — *John 12:21*

May 31, 2020

## *The Histories, History and What To Do Today*

*by Kemy Marrs*

The Greek historian Polybius (200 BC–117 BC) was taken hostage by the Romans in 167 BC and was allowed to study the Roman constitution in detail. He witnessed the fall of Carthage in 146 BC and became an expert on the rise of the Roman Empire. He wrote *The Histories*, originally a 40-volume work that students of Constitutional Law still study today. Polybius was well informed, conversant with world leaders and knowing the history of past governments could “see the writing on the wall” for some nations. He reminds me a bit of Daniel in the Old Testament.

In his preface to book VI, before Polybius would discuss the Roman constitution, he called the reader to pause and examine the truth of the following statement:

In private life if you wish to satisfy yourself as to the badness or goodness of particular persons, you would not, if you wish to get a genuine test, examine their conduct at a time of uneventful repose, but in the hour of brilliant success or conspicuous reverse. *For the true test of a perfect man is the power of bearing with spirit and dignity violent changes of fortune.*

That last sentence, which I emphasized, reads almost like a proverb. While sudden misfortune may be more common to many than sudden fortune, still, a sudden and radical reversal of fortune (for good or bad) can unhinge people who now must make new decisions, based upon new circumstances with new and often greater consequences. You know, the “new normal.”

In the past weeks, I have thought often of the global events of World War II. Over the course of roughly 6 years, countless battles were fought and *scores of millions* died. No one escaped the consequences of this nightmare. Fortunes had violently changed... yet... Christians still rose up with peace on their hearts to worship God.

In June 1940, the German Luftwaffe escalated their yearlong attack on England and began to target civilians in London. Families put their children on trains to take them out to safety in the countryside. People would entomb themselves in underground shelters and train stations during the night air raids, and then, at dawn, walk out into the open day, clearing rubble/debris/bodies to begin their regular day of work. The Battle of Britain

lasted only 3 and a half months but is still remembered as “their finest hour.” Fortunes had violently changed... yet... Christians still rose up with peace on their hearts to worship God.

Of course ours is nothing to compare to the Battle of Britain, but for the moment, our routine has changed; for some, fortunes are changing and families are struggling. Here is that “genuine test” that Polybius spoke of; our true character is about to be revealed for all to see. What do we do?

We thank the Lord for His providential care. We thank the Lord for the unprecedented amount of prosperity He has given our land. We thank the Lord for the extraordinary length of days he has given this generation. We thank the Lord for our sons and daughters and the joy and hope they give us... and then we thank God for HIS Son and the joy and assurance He gives us as we rise each day to meet the ever-changing world that we *know* is doomed.

This is an important moment because it is precisely a time like this that our children and brethren are looking to see our reaction to factors that are beyond our control or authority. We may have a legitimate complaint on issues we think important but others do not. What do we do? I would suggest we remember that Paul wrote the Roman Christians that “if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (12:18); and later he would write his beloved Philippian brethren to let their reasonableness/ gentleness/graciousness/ forbearance be known to all men (4:5)... because the Lord was at hand.

In joy or sorrow, in plenty or want, in peace or turmoil, whether in family circles or larger assemblies; our children and their children will learn from us... when they see us rise up with peace on our hearts to worship God.

### News

As of Saturday evening, we have not received any new announcements. Continue prayers for the Brancos and consult last week's View for continuing prayer requests.

# The Value Of Difficulty

by David Barnes

Perhaps the most challenging skill every Christian must develop is learning to appreciate the value in difficulties. Thanking God for blessings is important but thanking Him for difficulties is crucial. The reason is blessings have to do with thankfulness but difficulty has to do with trust.

I might be thankful for a gift from someone but that does not mean I trust them. However, if I trust them I am thankful for whatever they give me, even if it is difficult.

This is the premise of the book of Job. Job 13:15 says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..." Job could not rely on his friends but he trusted God even though it appeared God was trying to kill him.

Trust was the issue in Matt. 4:4 when Jesus was tempted by Satan: "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

II Cor. 12 is an extremely informative passage about suffering and how God sees it versus how we see it. Paul asked three times that the thorn be removed and God said "no" all three times. Paul was persistent in his prayer and God was persistent in his answer. Eventually God told Paul "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (12:9).

That was the lesson from the test! Paul trusted God and became a more valuable tool in the hands of the Almighty.

To me the greatest passage about this is Heb. 5:7-9 "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him," If Jesus learned obedience through suffering then so should we!

Hard times, like the ones we're going through right now, test the anchor of the soul. They tell us about "the rope" we use to tether our life to reality. Is it strong enough to take the strain? Can it take the tremendous pressure? Is the house built on the rock or on sand?

We should be thankful for times of testing because they tell us more about ourselves than times of blessings. Here is a short verse of a poem from Douglas Malloch

The tree that never had to fight  
For sun and sky and air and light,  
But stood out in the open plain  
And always got its share of rain,

Never became a forest king  
But lived and died a scrubby thing.  
The man who never had to toil  
To gain and farm his patch of soil,  
Who never had to win his share  
Of sun and sky and light and air,  
Never became a manly man  
But lived and died as he began.

Difficulties make us stronger. They challenge us to do better. They are mirrors we are forced to look into that tell us who we really are. Difficulties are not intended to embarrass us but to educate us. God gives them so that we can properly evaluate our strength and weakness. He does that so we will be stronger. It's like any test of any type. The test tells us where we are in relationship to where we want to be.

We should be thankful for the test we're in right now. We're not thankful that people are dying, but we should be thankful that we are given a barometer that helps us look deep in our soul and see ourselves in clear light. It's an opportunity to be the light of the world for people whose anchor has come loose. We can show them the place to put their anchor (Jesus) and the rope to use (faith) to keep them safe.

If we are not anchored firmly it's going to be difficult if not impossible to help them. That's why we need to be strong. The only way to be strong is to be tested. When the test has passed, evaluate yourself to see what you need to do to be stronger. That's what the test is for. Here is the rest of the poem...

Good timber does not grow with ease:  
The stronger wind, the stronger trees;  
The further sky, the greater length;  
The more the storm, the more the strength.  
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,  
In trees and men good timbers grow.  
Where thickest lies the forest growth,  
We find the patriarchs of both.  
And they hold counsel with the stars  
Whose broken branches show the scars  
Of many winds and much of strife.  
This is the common law of life.

Everything mentioned in Hebrews 11 is "challenge oriented." As we have said many times, the key to Hebrews 11 are verbs of action. The people were challenged/tested with grave difficulties and met the challenge with faith and trust in God. As they faced their challenge of their day we can meet our challenge of our day. We will succeed by virtue of the exact same formula, faith in God!

*Be thankful for difficult times...*