



"A Father's Son"

Most Americans are at least somewhat familiar with Theodore Roosevelt, the nation's 26th president. One historian described him as "the most interesting man to ever become president." In addition to being a statesman, he was an author, a soldier, an explorer, and a naturalist. His face carved on Mt. Rushmore preserves his memory for generations.

It must have been difficult for T.R.'s son, Theodore Roosevelt Jr., to grow up and live his life in the shadow of his famous father. But Ted Roosevelt wore the name very well.

When America entered the First World War, inspired by his father's example and his own sense of patriotism, Ted enlisted. Major Roosevelt was highly decorated for his action in France, receiving the Bronze Star, the Croix de Guerre, and the Purple Heart for being gassed and machine gunned in the leg. His heroics did not have the same swashbuckling flair as his father's famous charge up San Juan Hill in the Spanish American War. However, his father spoke elegantly of his son, "I'm so proud of him. He has ennobled his ancestors. I walk with my head higher because of him."

Sadly, "the War to End All Wars" failed in its ideal. Instead World War I planted seeds that would bring forth an even greater global conflict. 23 years after Theodore Roosevelt died, World War II erupted. And Ted Roosevelt reenlisted. He had already served his country. He was now, by military standards, an old man. But the need for seasoned leadership was great in this national emergency. The son of the Rough Rider would serve his country again, this time as a colonel and then a brigadier general.

Theodore Roosevelt Jr. was the highest ranking officer to go ashore in the first wave on D Day. He directed his troops on Utah Beach while walking about with a cane, bullets kicking up sand and mortar shells bursting around him. General Omar Bradley was once asked to name the most heroic act of the war. He replied, "Theodore

Roosevelt on Utah Beach.” For his conspicuous gallantry he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor - posthumously.

General Roosevelt was 57 years old, fighting alongside soldiers less than half his age. He died of a heart attack six days after D Day. His body lies in Normandy American Cemetery in France, along with over 9000 other American soldiers.

After his death, Ted Roosevelt’s wife received a letter he had quickly penned before disembarking for Normandy. The letter concludes with these words: “Our life has been very full - our feet were placed in a large room - and we did not bury our talent in a napkin. We’re under way and time is short now. What the future holds for our armies or for us as individuals no man knows.”

Roosevelt’s biographer failed to identify the biblical allusions in this letter. The reference to feet placed in a large room is from Psalm 31:8, referring to opportunity. The comment about the talent is from the parable of the ten stewards in Luke 19:20, referring to responsibility. Roosevelt enjoyed his life. But evidently he understood his life as being about something much more than personal pleasure. His life was a stewardship. It was for service. All Americans ought to be grateful for his understanding as our liberty is in part paid for by his sacrifice.

If only we could all come to the end of our days with the same assessment as Ted Roosevelt - having recognized our opportunities and not hidden our talents! Much as Theodore Roosevelt Sr. was pleased with the son who wore his name, we might someday hear our heavenly Father say to us, “Well done.”