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Quotes by Roosevelt, Theodore

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In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

At sometime in our lives a devil dwells within us, causes heartbreaks, confusion and troubles, then dies.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Freedom from effort in the present merely means that there has been effort stored up in the past.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

There has never yet been a man in our history who led a life of ease whose name is worth remembering.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

No man is above the law, and no man is below it.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

No man is justified in doing evil on the ground of expediency.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The boy who is going to make a great man must not make up his mind merely to overcome a thousand obstacles, but to win in spite of a thousand repulses and defeats.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed. In this life we get nothing

save by effort.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The American people abhor a vacuum.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The government is us; we are the government, you and I.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

There is something to be said for government by a great aristocracy which has furnished leaders to the nation in peace and war for generations; even a democrat like myself must admit this. But there is absolutely nothing to be said for government by a plutocracy, for government by men very powerful in certain lines and gifted with the money touch, but with ideals which in their essence are merely those of so many glorified pawnbrokers.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

I think there is only one quality worse than hardness of heart and that is softness of head.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Some men can live up to their loftiest ideals without ever going higher than a basement.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Every immigrant who comes here should be required within five years to learn English or leave the country.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is only through labor and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is difficult to make our material condition better by the best law, but it is easy enough to ruin it by bad laws.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

People ask the difference between a leader and a boss. The leader works in the open, and the boss in covert. The leader leads, and the boss drives.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is better to be faithful than famous.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The men with the muck-rake are often indispensable to the well-being of society, but only if they know when to stop raking the muck.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

All the resources we need are in the mind

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The man who makes no mistakes does not usually make anything

- Roosevelt, Theodore

There can be no fifty-fifty Americanism in this country. There is room here for only 100 % Americanism, only for those who are Americans and nothing else.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Obedience of the law is demanded; not asked as a favor.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

I care not what others think of what I do, but I care very much about what I think of what I do! That is character!

- Roosevelt, Theodore

A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards. More than that no man is entitled to, and less than that no man shall have.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The pacifist is as surely a traitor to his country and to humanity as is the most brutal wrongdoer.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Peace is normally a great good, and normally it coincides with righteousness, but it is righteousness and not peace which should bind the conscience of a nation as it should bind the conscience of an individual; and neither a nation nor an individual can surrender conscience to another's keeping.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

I am only an average man but, by George, I work harder at it than the average man.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The old parties are husks, with no real soul within either, divided on artificial lines, boss-ridden and privilege-controlled, each a jumble of incongruous elements, and neither daring to speak out wisely and fearlessly on what should be said on the vital issues of the day.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

When they call the roll in the Senate, the senators do not know whether to answer present or not guilty.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The most successful politician is he who says what everybody is thinking most often and in the loudest voice.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Willful sterility is, from the standpoint of the nation, from the standpoint of the human race, the one sin for which the penalty is national death, race death; a sin for which there is no atonement. No man, no woman, can shirk the primary duties of life, whether for love of ease and pleasure, or for any other cause, and retain his or her self-respect.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

No people is wholly civilized where a distinction is drawn between stealing an office and stealing a purse.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Our chief usefulness to humanity rests on our combining power with high purpose. Power

undirected by high purpose spells calamity, and high purpose by itself is utterly useless if the power to put it into effect is lacking.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Aggressive fighting for the right is the greatest sport in the world.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is impossible to win the great prizes of life without running risks, and the greatest of all prizes are those connected with the home.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is not the critic who counts. Not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause. Who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The men and women who have the right ideals... are those who have the courage to strive for the happiness which comes only with labor and effort and self-sacrifice, and those whose joy in life springs in part from power of work and sense of duty.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

I want to see you shoot the way you shout.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Don't hit at all if it is honorably possible to avoid hitting, but never hit soft.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell em, Certainly I can! -- and get busy and find out how to do it.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

We must remember not to judge any public servant by any one act, and especially should we beware of attacking the men who are merely the occasions and not the cause of

disaster.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

No man is worth his salt who is not ready at all times to risk his well-being, to risk his body, to risk his life, in a great cause.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

No man needs sympathy because he has to work. Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is essential that there should be organization of labor. This is an era of organization. Capital organizes and therefore labor must organize.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

I don't pity any man who does hard work worth doing. I admire him. I pity the creature who does not work, at whichever end of the social scale he may regard himself as being.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Probably the greatest harm done by vast wealth is the harm that we of moderate means do ourselves when we let the vices of envy and hatred enter deep into our own natures.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Nine-tenths of wisdom consists in being wise in time.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

One of our defects as a nation is a tendency to use what have been called weasel words. When a weasel sucks eggs the meat is sucked out of the egg. If you use a weasel word after another there is nothing left of the other.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

We need the iron qualities that go with true manhood. We need the positive virtues of resolution, of courage, of indomitable will, of power to do without shrinking the rough work that must always be done.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Never throughout history has a man who lived a life of ease left a name worth remembering.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Get action. Seize the moment. Man was never intended to become an oyster.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

For unflagging interest and enjoyment, a household of children, if things go reasonably well, certainly all other forms of success and achievement lose their importance by comparison.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

My hat's in the ring. The fight is on and I'm stripped to the buff.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Don't foul, don't flinch. Hit the line hard.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows

the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Every man has a right to one country. He has a right to love and serve that country and to feel that it is absolutely his country and that he has in it every right possessed by anyone else. It is our duty to require the man of German blood who is an American citizen to give up all allegiance to Germany wholeheartedly and without on his part any mental reservation whatever. If he does this it becomes no less our duty to give him the full rights of an American, including our loyal respect and friendship without on our part any mental reservation whatever. The duties are reciprocal, and from the standpoint of American patriotism one is as important as the other.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

My position as regards the monied interests can be put in a few words. In every civilized society property rights must be carefully safeguarded; ordinarily and in the great majority of cases, human rights and property rights are fundamentally and in the long run, identical; but when it clearly appears that there is a real conflict between them, human rights must have the upper hand; for property belongs to man and not man to property.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

If we are to be a really great people, we must strive in good faith to play a great part in the world. We cannot avoid meeting great issues. All that we can determine for ourselves is

whether we shall meet them well or ill.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

There is a homely old adage which runs: Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far. If the American Nation will speak softly, and yet build, and keep at a pitch of the highest training, a thoroughly efficient navy, the Monroe Doctrine will go far.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

A man must first care for his own household before he can be of use to the state. But no matter how well he cares for his household, he is not a good citizen unless he also takes thought of the state. In the same way, a great nation must think of its own internal affairs; and yet it cannot substantiate its claim to be a great nation unless it also thinks of its position in the world at large.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Americanism means the virtues of courage, honor, justice, truth, sincerity, and hardihood the virtues that made America. The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living and the get-rich-quick theory of life.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Every man among us is more fit to meet the duties and responsibilities of citizenship because of the perils over which, in the past, the nation has triumphed; because of the blood and sweat and tears, the labor and the anguish, through which, in the days that have gone, our forefathers moved on to triumph.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Here in the United States we turn our rivers and streams into sewers and dumping-grounds, we pollute the air, we destroy forests, and exterminate fishes, birds, and mammals not to speak of vulgarizing charming landscapes with hideous advertisements. But at last it looks as if our people were awakening. Many leading men, Americans and Canadians, are doing all they can for the Conservation movement.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Conservation and rural-life policies are really two sides of the same policy; and down at bottom this policy rests upon the fundamental law that neither man nor nation can prosper unless, in dealing with the present, thought is steadily taken for the future.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The idea that our natural resources were inexhaustible still obtained, and there was as yet no real knowledge of their extent and condition. The relation of the conservation of natural resources to the problems of National welfare and National efficiency had not yet dawned on the public mind. The reclamation of arid public lands in the West was still a matter for private enterprise alone; and our magnificent river system, with its superb possibilities for public usefulness, was dealt with by the National Government not as a unit, but as a disconnected series of pork-barrel problems, whose only real interest was in their effect

on the reelection or defeat of a Congressman here and there a theory which, I regret to say, still obtains.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

If we lose the virile, manly qualities, and sink into a nation of mere hucksters, putting gain over national honor, and subordinating everything to mere ease of life, then we shall indeed reach a condition worse than that of the ancient civilizations in the years of their decay.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

We cannot afford merely to sit down and deplore the evils of city life as inevitable, when cities are constantly growing, both absolutely and relatively. We must set ourselves vigorously about the task of improving them; and this task is now well begun.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Wars are, of course, as a rule to be avoided; but they are far better than certain kinds of peace.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The weakling and the coward are out of place in a strong and free community. In a republic like ours the governing class is composed of the strong men who take the trouble to do the work of government; and if you are too timid or too fastidious or too careless to do your part in this work, then you forfeit your right to be considered one of the governing and you become one of the governed instead one of the driven cattle of the political arena.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The need for collecting large campaign funds would vanish if Congress provided an appropriation for the proper and legitimate expenses of each of the great national parties, an appropriation ample enough to meet the necessity for thorough organization and machinery, which requires a large expenditure of money. Then the stipulation should be made that no party receiving campaign funds from the Treasury should accept more than a fixed amount from any individual subscriber or donor; and the necessary publicity for receipts and expenditures could without difficulty be provided.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Yes, Haven, most of us enjoy preaching, and I've got such a bully pulpit!

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The President is merely the most important among a large number of public servants. He should be supported or opposed exactly to the degree which is warranted by his good

conduct or bad conduct, his efficiency or inefficiency in rendering loyal, able, and disinterested service to the nation as a whole. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that there should be full liberty to tell the truth about his acts, and this means that it is exactly as necessary to blame him when he does wrong as to praise him when he does right. Any other attitude in an American citizen is both base and servile. To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public. Nothing but the truth should be spoken about him or any one else. But it is even more important to tell the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, about him than about any one else.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Our loyalty is due entirely to the United States. It is due to the President only and exactly to the degree in which he efficiently serves the United States. It is our duty to support him when he serves the United States well. It is our duty to oppose him when he serves it badly. This is true about Mr. Wilson now and it has been true about all our Presidents in the past. It is our duty at all times to tell the truth about the President and about every one else, save in the cases where to tell the truth at the moment would benefit the public enemy.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

My view was that every executive officer, and above all every executive officer in high position, was a steward of the people bound actively and affirmatively to do all he could for the people, and not to content himself with the negative merit of keeping his talents undamaged in a napkin. I declined to adopt the view that what was imperatively

necessary for the Nation could not be done by the President unless he could find some specific authorization to do it. My belief was that it was not only his right but his duty to do anything that the needs of the Nation demanded unless such action was forbidden by the Constitution or by the laws. Under this interpretation of executive power I did and caused to be done many things not previously done by the President and the heads of the departments. I did not usurp power, but I did greatly broaden the use of executive power. In other words, I acted for the public welfare, I acted for the common well-being of all our people, whenever and in whatever manner was necessary, unless prevented by direct constitutional or legislative prohibition.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The most practical kind of politics is the politics of decency.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

He has been called a mediocre man; but this is unwarranted flattery. He was a politician of monumental littleness.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

After the war, and until the day of his death, his position on almost every public question was either mischievous or ridiculous, and usually both.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

The plea of good intentions is not one that can be allowed to have much weight in passing historical judgment upon a man whose wrong-headedness and distorted way of looking at

things produced, or helped to produce, such incalculable evil; there is a wide political applicability in the remark attributed to a famous Texan, to the effect that he might, in the end, pardon a man who shot him on purpose, but that he would surely never forgive one who did so accidentally.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

No man who is not willing to bear arms and to fight for his rights can give a good reason why he should be entitled to the privilege of living in a free community.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Only those are fit to live who do not fear to die; and none are fit to die who have shrunk from the joy of life and the duty of life. Both life and death are parts of the same Great Adventure.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

We are face to face with our destiny and we must meet it with a high and resolute courage. For us is the life of action, of strenuous performance of duty; let us live in the harness, striving mightily; let us rather run the risk of wearing out than rusting out.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort

without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

Of all the officers of the Government, those of the Department of Justice should be kept most free from any suspicion of improper action on partisan or factional grounds, so that there shall be gradually a growth, even though a slow growth, in the knowledge that the Federal courts and the representatives of the Federal Department of Justice insist on meting out even-handed justice to all.

- Roosevelt, Theodore

There can be no fifty-fifty Americanism in this country. There is room here for only one hundred percent Americanism.

- Roosevelt, Theodore



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