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## ***The Dunadan: Bilbo's Friend***

### **A Monthly Reflection on Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings***

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The first book of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is called *The Fellowship of the Ring*. "Fellowship," as you know, is a synonym for "friendship." Indeed, *The Fellowship of the Ring* is all about friendship. For that matter, so is the rest of the trilogy; the trilogy taken as a whole is about friendship.

We now focus in on two members of the Fellowship: Gandalf and Frodo. Right from the beginning of the trilogy, it is clear that these two are very dear friends. Gandalf comes to visit Frodo at Bag End, where Gandalf tells Frodo the history of Bilbo's Ring, which Frodo has inherited. Gandalf finished the story by telling Frodo that the Dark Lord Sauron has found out about the Shire and that a hobbit by the name of "Baggins" has the One Ring that Sauron has sent his dreadful Black Riders ruthlessly to search for. It is frightening news and it causes Frodo to turn to his very dear friend for advice:



'But this is terrible!' cried Frodo. 'Far worse than the worst that I had imagined from your hints and warnings. O Gandalf, best of friends, what am I to do? For now I am really afraid. What am I to do? What a pity Bilbo did not stab that vile creature when he had the chance!'<sup>1</sup>

Then follows the immortal speech of Gandalf, which begins with the famous line, "Pity? It was Pity that stayed his hand."<sup>2</sup> In this speech, Gandalf explains that it was right for Bilbo to take pity on the poor wretch of a creature, Gollum, by sparing his life, giving him another chance, showing him mercy. If Bilbo is not merciful, if he does not spare Gollum, then Gollum is not present at the Crack of Doom to save Frodo - and with Frodo all Middle-earth - from his last-minute lapse of claiming the Ring for his own. The world of Middle-earth would have been irrevocably doomed! As Gandalf had predicted: "The pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many - [Frodo's] not least [of all]."<sup>3</sup>

Every Christian knows that Jesus is the King of Mercy, who has ransomed us from the eternal doom of slavery to Satan, the Dark Lord of this world. And that slavery would have been the worst misery imaginable. **O Happy Fault that won for us so great a Redeemer!**

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<sup>1</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 65-66.

**Praised be Jesus Christ, now and forever!**