



LIVING OUT OF SUITCASES

Life can be compared to a brief stay in a hotel. In some cases the hotel is a fleabag, and in others, there may be mints on the pillows and flowers on the table. But whatever the hotel's rating, we are still living out of suitcases while we are there. And since we know it is not our home, we don't concern ourselves with changing the decor, even if we dislike the curtains and wallpaper. God never intended room service to replace good home-cooked meals; it is a mistake to confuse hotel life with the glorious dwelling place He is preparing for those who know and love His Son.

Part of our problem is that God's promises seem vague and distant—we have no memories of heaven. But He has given us His word that He will more than make it worth our while. "For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come" (Hebrews 13:14). If we remember that here we are sojourners, strangers, and aliens in exile, our priorities will begin to reflect those of Abraham who "was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God"

—Hebrews 11:8-10.

CREDIT CARD DONATIONS TO REFLECTIONS MINISTRIES
For your convenience, you can now make contributions to the work of Reflections Ministries by credit card. You can call the Reflections Ministries office (404-842-0707) or visit our website (www.kenboa.org) for more information.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
KEN BOA'S
MEDIA RESOURCES
You can keep in touch with
Ken via Twitter at KennethBoa
or on Facebook at Kenneth Boa.

A teaching letter of



THE TEMPORAL AND THE ETERNAL (PART 22)

Poets, Saints, and Heroes

Be most careful, then, how you conduct yourselves, like sensible men, not like simpletons. Use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days. So do not be fools, but try to understand what the will of the Lord is. - Ephesians 5:15-17 (NEB)

Have you ever had a hero? Was it Zorro? Superman? Sherlock Holmes? There was something about hero-stories that rang with truth, because it seemed that the darkest hour would be the point at which a great transformation would take place. I'd like to tell a story about a hero, an unlikely little guy, who made a big difference to his friends and to his world. His name is Samwise Gamgee.

In J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers*, two heroes, Frodo and "Sam," are in a desperate situation. They're in Osgiliath, the capitol city from the early days of the mighty country Gondor. Their quest to prevent the One Ring from falling into the hands of the Dark Lord seems lost. The countries of Gondor and Rohan have gathered their people to Helm's Deep, Rohan's mountain fortress, expecting to battle and to die. Sam and Frodo have lost communication, information, and hope of their seven other companions.

Frodo fears the task is too much for him. He tells Sam, "I can't do this." But Sam, through the simplicity of faith, recalls his own childhood heroes as he encourages Frodo to carry on with these words:

I know...I know. It's all wrong. By rights we shouldn't even be here, but we are. It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were, and sometimes you didn't want to know the end, because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the

way it was when so much bad happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing.

It is times like these that make a hero great. Sam, the humble, everyman character, is bold here, encouraging Frodo to continue. Through that straightforwardness of faith and the quest for his purpose, he carries on in spite of great odds.

It is my belief that the greatest heroes, men and women, since the inception of the church, have not been recorded in church history textbooks. The vast majority of those people were, like Sam, of modest means, unsung heroes of the faith who pressed on in those dark hours. They weren't really noticeable, yet they clung to the hope that God had given them. They

These aren't people who gave in or begged God to make life go their way; they are those who persevered in trials, knowing that what was in store for them was much better than any wish they could ever dream.

would not make a humanly visible mark on this world, but they knew that God had called them for a purpose and that size has nothing to do with the importance of that purpose. These aren't people who gave in or begged God to make life go their way; they are those who persevered in trials, knowing that what was in store for them was much better than any wish they could ever dream.

We can look at the small spot we occupy on this earth inside this enormous galaxy in our unimaginably large universe and be overwhelmed with awe or even fear. But our size seldom has anything to do with our importance. Just ask Samwise Gamgee.

The Parable of the Ship

In some respects, it's very easy to see that we are on a planet that may be in its darkest hour. There *is* a Dark Lord that threatens us. Yet, instead of persevering in hope, it is easy for us to fail to hear the messages; life in the immediate is *so loud*. "Now" can be so

overwhelmingly frightening or painful that we lose our long-term perspective and become incapable of hearing any voice of warning or wisdom. Or "now" can become so enjoyable and so compelling that we become distracted from our eternal perspective and begin to lay our hope on things that cannot bear its weight.

A luxury liner was traveling across the Atlantic as a massive party took place in its ballroom and a massive storm raged outside. As a result of the storm, an accident occurred, leaving the ship critically damaged. But the people were unaware of the damage, and the captain (seeing that everyone was having such a great time drinking and dancing) didn't believe the reports and didn't allow notice of the accident to be broadcast over the speakers inside. So the party and the journey (and the storm outside) continued.

"The ship is fatally damaged; you must come to the lifeboats." It blared over the PA system and rescuers shouted the message to the passengers, one by one. But most of the people were very caught up in the festivities. The band played loudly as the ship was sinking, and the people were really enjoying themselves, but a few who ventured out did notice that the ship actually was leaning toward the starboard side.

Interestingly, some of the people became confused. They put on their lifejackets, but the party had been so much fun that they went back to try to squeeze in a few more minutes. Others rushed past the rescue workers to their quarters. Once inside their cabins, they were gripped with fear of what was now a clear reality. Some began to fall down and pray. "God, something is terribly wrong. We are willing to follow you...if you will please just stop our ship from going under." But it became evident that he wasn't changing his plans. So they got up off the floor and returned to the ballroom. When asked where they had gone, their reply was that they had believed the earlier report. They had prayed to God, and it didn't work.

So the ship eventually sank. Yes, right before the final plunge, there was a last-minute rush to the lifeboats, and frantic searching for life vests. But the boats were gone, and it seemed like there were just enough life vests for those who had left when the rescue team called them. No comments were heard about continuing the party as the ship was engulfed by the rolling waves.

Those who embraced life in the ballroom lost their lives, while those who heeded the warning and boarded the lifeboats did not. But there is a second story here, the story of those who, even in a time when they were totally powerless, most in need of help from an all-powerful saving force, demanded that God change *his* concept of life. When those people returned to the ballroom, they would see that ballroom life had lost something; but refusing to be saved, they, nonetheless, lost their lives. The only people who would be saved were the ones who heeded the message and stepped out into the unknown, to *lifeboat life*. They would save their lives and eventually enter into a new quality of life, one much better than the diversion of life on the ship.

As we dig deeper into what choosing a worldview means, it becomes clear that it's not

going to be easy and that it's not a one-time decision. There will be times when we hurt so much that we might prefer the distraction of the ballroom, and there will be times that are so good that we find ourselves praying to God to let us stay there. These times will force us to make our choice again: *Either we will view all of our life in light of the eternal, or we will cling to the temporal, all the time trying to modify the eternal to conform to our desires.*

The latter is a terrible blunder. It is foolishness to try to persuade God to modify his great plan only to get on board with our personal agenda; but there are many who are trying to do this very thing. They're not interested in lifeboat life, but they will unwittingly allow themselves to be lured into the water by the sirens that call them to their deaths.