

# Meeting



# Your Goliath

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

*The battle for our souls is no less important than the battle fought by David. The enemy is no less formidable, the help of Almighty God no farther away.*

**O**f all the battles that have been fought over many centuries in the area of the world known as the Holy Land, no single battle is better remembered than the one which occurred in the Valley of Elah during the year 1063 B.C. Along the mountains on one side, the feared armies of the Philistines were marshaled to march directly to the heart of Judah and the Jordan Valley. On the other side of the valley, King Saul had drawn up his armies in opposition.

Historians tell us that the opposing forces were about evenly matched in number and in skill. However, the Philistines had managed to keep secret their valued knowledge of smelting and fashioning iron into formidable weapons of war. The sound of hammers pounding upon anvils and the sight of smoke rising skyward from many bellows as the smiths went about the task of sharpening weapons and fashioning new ones must have struck fear into the hearts of Saul's warriors, for even the most novice of soldiers would know the superiority of iron weapons to those of brass.

As often happened when armies faced each other, individual champions challenged others from the opposing forces to single combat. There was considerable precedent for this sort of fighting; and on more than one occasion, notably during the tenure of Samson as judge, battles had



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been decided by individual combat.


Now, however, the situation was reversed as far as Israel was concerned, and it was a Philistine who dared to challenge all others—a veritable giant of a man called Goliath of Gath. He wore heavy brass armor and a coat of mail. And the staff of his spear would stagger a strong man merely to lift, let alone hurl. His shield was the longest ever seen or heard of, and his sword a fearsome blade.

This champion from the Philistine camp stood and cried unto the armies of Israel: “Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me” (1 Samuel 17:8).

His challenge was that if he were overpowered by an Israelite warrior, then all the Philistines would become servants to the Israelites. On the other hand, if he were victorious, the Israelites would become their slaves. Goliath roared: “I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together” (1 Samuel 17:10).

For forty days came the challenge, met only by fear and trembling. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man Goliath, “fled from him, and were sore afraid” (1 Samuel 17:24).

There was one, however, who did not quake with fear nor run in alarm. Rather, he



stiffened the spine of Israel's soldiers by his piercing question of rebuke toward them: "Is there not a cause? . . . Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:19, 32). David, the shepherd boy, had spoken. But he did not speak just as a shepherd boy. For the hands of the prophet Samuel had rested upon his head and anointed him; and the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him.

Saul said to David: "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth" (1 Samuel 17:33). But David persevered; and bedecked with the armour of Saul, he prepared to meet the giant. Realizing his helplessness so garbed, David discarded the armor, took instead his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag; and with his sling in hand, he drew near to the Philistine.

All of us remember the shocked exclamation of Goliath: "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? . . . Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field" (1 Samuel 17:43-44).

Then David said: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

"This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

"And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

"And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

"And David put his hand in his bag, and



# The stone of COURAGE

took thence a stone, and slang it and smote the Philistine in the forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him" (1 Samuel 17:45–50).

The battle had been fought. The victory had been won. David emerged a national hero, his destiny before him.

Some of us remember David as a shepherd boy divinely commissioned by the Lord through the prophet Samuel. Others of us know him as a mighty warrior, for doesn't the record show the chant of the adoring women following his many victorious battles, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7)? Or perhaps we look upon him as the inspired poet or as one of Israel's greatest kings. Still others recall that he violated the laws of God and took Bathsheba, she who belonged to another. He even arranged the death of her husband Uriah. I like to think of David as the righteous lad who had the courage and the faith to face insurmountable odds when all others hesitated, and to redeem the name of Israel by facing that giant in his life—Goliath of Gath.

Well might we look carefully into our own lives and judge our courage, our faith. Is there a Goliath in your life? Is there one in mine? Does he stand squarely between you and your desired happiness? Your Goliath may not carry a sword or hurl a verbal challenge of insult that all may hear and force you to decision. He may not be ten feet tall, but he likely will appear equally as formidable, and his silent challenge may shame and embarrass.

One man's Goliath may be the stranglehold of a cigarette or perhaps an unquenchable thirst for alcohol. To another, her Goliath may

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be an unruly tongue or a selfish streak which causes her to spurn the poor and the down-trodden. Envy, greed, fear, laziness, doubt, vice, pride, lust, selfishness, discouragement—all spell Goliath.

The giant you face will not diminish in size nor in power or strength by your vain hoping, wishing, or waiting for him to do so. Rather, he increases in power as his hold upon you tightens.

The poet truly describes this truth:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mein,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

(Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Man," l. 217)

The battle for our souls is no less important that the battle fought by David. The enemy is no less formidable, the help of Almighty God no farther away. What will our action be? Like David of old, "our cause is just." We have been placed upon earth not to fail or fall victim to temptation's snare, but rather to succeed. Our giant, our Goliath, must be conquered.

David went to the brook and carefully selected five smooth stones with which he might meet his enemy. He was deliberate in his selection, for there could be no turning back, no second chance—this battle was to be decisive.

Just as David went to the brook, well might we go to our source of supply—the Lord. What polished stones will you select to defeat the



The stone of EFFORT



The stone of HUMILITY

Goliath that is robbing you of your happiness by smothering your opportunities? May I offer suggestions.

The stone of COURAGE will be essential to your victory. As we survey the challenges of life, that which is easy is rarely right. In fact, the course that we should properly follow appears at times impossible, impenetrable, hopeless.

Such did the way appear to Laman and Lemuel. When they looked upon their assignment to go unto the house of Laban and seek the records according to God's command, they murmured, saying it was a hard thing that was required of them. Thus, a lack of courage took from them their opportunity, and it was given to courageous Nephi, who responded, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). The stone of courage is needed.

Next, I select the stone of EFFORT—mental effort and physical effort.

*The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night.*

(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Ladder of St. Augustine")

The decision to overcome a fault or correct a weakness is an actual step in the process of doing so.

"Thrust in thy sickle with thy might" was not spoken of missionary work alone.

Then there must be in our selection the stone of HUMILITY, for haven't we been told through divine revelation that when we are humble, the Lord, our God, will lead us by the hand and give us answer to our prayers?

And who would go forth to battle his Goliath without the stone of PRAYER, remembering that the recognition of a power higher than oneself is in no way debasing; rather, it exalts.

Finally, let us choose the stone of LOVE OF DUTY. Duty is not merely to do the thing we ought to do, but to do it when we should, whether we like it or not.

Armed with this selection of five polished stones to be propelled by the mighty sling of faith, we need then but take the staff of virtue to steady us, and we are ready to meet the giant Goliath, wherever, and whenever, and however we find him.

For the stone of COURAGE will melt the Goliath of fear. The stone of EFFORT will bring down the Goliath of indecision and procrastination. And the Goliaths of pride, of envy, of lack of self-respect will not stand before the power of the stones of HUMILITY, PRAYER, and DUTY.

Above all else, may we ever remember that we do not go forth alone to battle the Goliaths of our lives. As David declared to Israel, so might we echo the knowledge, "The battle is the Lord's, and he will give



The stone of PRAYER

[Goliath] into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:47).

But the battle must be fought. Victory cannot come by default. So it is in the battles of life. Life will never spread itself in an unobstructed view before us. We must anticipate the approaching forks and turnings in the road. We cannot hope to reach our desired journey's end if we think aimlessly about whether to go east or west. We must make our decisions purposefully. Our most significant opportunities will be found in times of greatest difficulty.

The vast, uncharted expanse of the Atlantic Ocean stood as a Goliath between Christopher Columbus and the New World. The hearts of his comrades became faint, their courage dimmed, hopelessness engulfed them; but Columbus prevailed with his watchword, "Westward, ever Westward, sail on, sail on." (See Joaquin Miller, "Columbus," in Ralph Henry and Lucile Pannell, comps., *My American Heritage*, [1949], 153–54.)

Carthage Jail, an angry mob with painted faces, and certain death faced the Prophet Joseph Smith. But from the wellsprings of his abundant faith he calmly met the Goliath of death. "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter," he had said over a month earlier, "but I am calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men" (*History of the Church*, 6:555).

Gethsemane, Golgotha, intense pain and suffering beyond the comprehension of mortal man stood between Jesus the Master and victory over the grave. Yet he lovingly assured us, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2–3).

And what is the significance of these accounts? Had there been no ocean, there would have

**W**hat polished stones will you select to defeat the Goliath that is robbing you of your happiness by smothering your opportunities? May I suggest the stones of Courage, Effort, Humility, Prayer, and Duty.

been no Columbus. No jail, no Joseph. No mob, no martyr. No cross, no Christ!

Should there be a Goliath in our lives, or a giant called by any other name, we need not "flee" or be "sore afraid" as we go up to battle against him. Rather we can find assurance and receive divine help from Him of whom David wrote in his inspired psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:1, 4).

Victory will be ours. **NE**



The stone of LOVE OF DUTY