

*The Six
Strongmen
of Satan*

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At the foundation of every problem, whether spiritual, emotional, or physical, there is an evil spirit called a *strongman*, who rules over a particular area of our lives. The Lord said in Matthew 12:29 that the strongman must be bound in order to plunder the house. (This strongman establishes a beachhead within a person and begins a covert campaign seeking to control as much of a person's life as possible.) Sometimes through genetics, this strongman assumes his assault at conception. Exodus 20:5 states that the sins of the fathers are passed down to the third and fourth generation. Medical science agrees that both emotional and physical disorders can be passed from one generation to the next. Satan is ever eager to oppress anyone; he does not discriminate in his oppression. He can even "possess" an unbeliever. The strongman always uses subordinate demons that can control a person and cause confusion, frustration, division and other destruction. John 10:10 states that Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy; but Jesus comes to give life more abundantly.

As we attempt to identify these various strongmen in the spirit realm, we must consider how it all began. In Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28:12, it is evident that the kings mentioned are not earthly kings but are symbolic pictures of Satan's original position and fall. Satan yielded to pride and unbelief in his futile attempt to overpower God.

Since that time, Satan has had a deceptive plot to control, cripple, and destroy mankind by using these six strongholds. **Pride** was the first sin committed by Satan when he began to exalt himself above God; this sin is the foundation of every sin man can commit. God hates pride (Proverbs 8:13; 6:16-17). It is the door to all contention. It is based on selfishness - *me, my* and *I*. It was the sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:5). Pride exalts "self" and works the same way in mankind as it did in Satan. If it goes unchecked, pride will usurp God's position and place self in control of our lives. Tempting people with pride is one of the highest forms of demonic activity. Yielding to it can lead to a liberal mindset contrary to Godly principles. For Proverbs 3:5-6 states that we are to trust in the Lord completely and not depend on our own understanding, but in all our ways we should acknowledge God and then He will direct our paths. Pride works to satisfy selfish motivations that always direct a person away from God. The opposite of pride is humility. To overcome pride, first, we must recognize (1 John 1:9) that pride exists in us, then repent of it, and finally, by faith receive humility in its place.

Another sin that Satan committed in his fall was **unbelief**. In fact, unbelief and pride go hand-in-hand. Unbelief is a lack of dependence on God or a lack of trust in Him and His Word. It keeps a person from a close, intimate relationship with God. Hebrews 11:6 states that without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Even though he walked with Jesus as a disciple, Judas Iscariot fell into the deadly web of unbelief and pride which caused him to turn against Jesus in greed and betrayal. Unbelief quenches the power of God to work in miracles and healing (Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5). As we repent of unbelief and receive faith by hearing God's Word, we are set free from this bondage (Romans 10:17; John 8:31-32; 15:7-8).

Lust is another strongman that can truly be devastating in a person's life. It is an illegitimate desire for something or someone that may fulfill selfish cravings. Satan uses lust as a mighty weapon to hinder a Christian's walk. In 1 Peter 2:11 we see that he wars against the soul through the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:17 states that the Spirit and flesh are in opposition to one another and that there is warfare going on inside us. Therefore, if we walk in the Spirit (verse 16), we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. This ungodly *desire* for things, food, people, positions, pleasures, power, or money gives the enemy legal ground to occupy areas in our life. James 4:3 states that we ask and do not receive because we ask with wrong motives, so that we may spend it on our pleasures - attempting to fulfill the lust

of the flesh. The strongman of lust will rule our lives by continually encouraging us to partake of forbidden fruit just as Adam and Eve did. Doing this always leads to death (Genesis 2:17). As we repent of lust and receive God's forgiveness, we should desire God and His will (1 John 1:7-9; 5:14-15).

Pride, unbelief, or lust lead to **rebellion** which controls any person who is determined to get what he wants whether God wants him to have it or not. This determination opens our lives, granting access to the strongman of rebellion. Rebellion is extremely dangerous because it neither recognizes nor submits to God or God-given authority. In Numbers 16, Korah and his followers were rebellious, costing them their lives. Their rebellion was against God and His appointed leader, Moses. King Saul was also controlled by rebellion. In 1 Samuel 15:23 Samuel told Saul that rebellion is as the sin of divination. Ultimately Saul's rebellion led to his death. There are many examples in the Bible of people who were rebellious but later submitted to God. David rebelled against God's Word in his lust for Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), but later repented (Psalms 51:10-12). David rebelled against God by not trusting God's protective power in 2 Samuel 24:1-17 but repented later. Many people today are rebelling against the spiritual authority of God. They need to repent as David did. Pride is engrained in rebellion, as the person is obsessed with his desires, his opinions, and his way, leaving God out of the equation and being independent. This strongman, though self-centered, can become self-destructive, the opposite of being led by the Holy Spirit. James 4:7 states that we cannot resist the devil unless we are first submitted or surrendered to God. Rebellion keeps us from this submissive attitude; but repentance can defeat rebellion. As we turn from rebellion, we become surrendered to God and He directs our lives.

Less-powerful evil spirits attach themselves to each strongman. This can be understood by visualizing an octopus having a main body and many tentacles. The strongman, the head and body part of the octopus, has tentacles which represent the other evil spirits. We can see this illustrated by referring to the fifth strongman, **rejection**. Rejection is the strongman, and the tentacles may be spirits of anger, bitterness, criticalness, doubt, envy, fear, hatred, jealousy, unforgiveness, or unworthiness. Pride and unbelief could also be in the head or body area along with rejection as multiple strongmen in a person. Sadly, most people have many strongmen and many subordinate spirits. A person who is suffering from rejection may have inherited this spirit from his ancestors as Exodus 20:5 states. We all have to deal with pride and unbelief, as well as a multitude of other spirits, which we received from our mothers and fathers. Inherited strongmen are the most difficult to detect and to be delivered from because they have been with us since conception. Sometimes we befriend these spirits and actually protect them through excuses such as "other people just don't understand me," "I like the way I am," or "the problem is with others." The attaching spirits will manifest outwardly, showing up in our daily lives. The sudden bursts of anger at family members or co-workers, if not dealt with, will fester into bitterness or even hatred. Usually a person with a strongman of rejection will compare himself to others and be very critical of others and even of himself. This critical spirit leads to self-doubt, unworthiness, envy, and jealousy. Furthermore, many fears may bombard the mind of a person with the strongman of rejection. He may even doubt his relationship with God. People with rejection have difficulty forgiving people who have hurt them, thereby giving an opening or legal ground for more tormenting spirits to enter into them (Matthew 18:32-35). When we see the symptoms or outward manifestations of these spirits, we need to apply 2 Chronicles 7:14 and humble ourselves before God in prayer, seeking God's revelation of what spirits are ruling our lives. Then we need to repent and ask God to forgive us for giving place to these spirits, to deliver us from their bondage, and to heal us. Healing replaces the evil spirit with God's opposite. Instead of rejection, God offers acceptance. We must receive it. God's replacement for pride is

humility; for unbelief, faith; for lust, God's will or desire; and for rebellion, surrender to God. As we repent, God will hear us, forgive us, and heal us. It is His desire for us to be whole in spirit, soul, and body (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 3 John 2).

Religion is the sixth strongman. From reading the gospels we can see that the most prevalent adversary of Jesus' ministry was the spirit of religion. This spirit is affiliated with pride, leading whomever it controls into blindness and destruction. In Matthew 15:1-20 there is an example of this spirit manifesting. Jesus said these people honored Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. He accused them of being blind guides of the blind who would fall into a pit (representing destruction). Religion is built on the foundation of men's traditions rather than God's commandments (Mark 7:1-23). As with the other strongmen, people who give place to this spirit are terribly deceived and do not realize it (John 16:2). There are thousands of religions with as many gods. The Pharisees had the name of the one true living God (Adonai) and the Scriptures (John 5:39), but they did not know God, and gave place to the strongman of religion. They pursued a law of righteousness instead of God's righteousness by faith in Him (Romans 9:30-32). The problem with the spirit of religion is that there is no relationship with the Father. To know Him is to know His voice and follow Him (John 10:1-18). This is the crucified life of Romans 6 and Galatians 2:20. Religion is based on works - always trying to work one's way to God; true Christianity, however, is being willing for God to accomplish His purpose in you through a surrendered relationship to Him. The one with a religious spirit looks at his own merits and judges others according to his own accomplishments, instead of pointing others to Jesus Christ by a surrendered relationship with Him.

Our daily lives are being squeezed by various trials, tribulations, and crises. Such situations will expose these strongmen. Honestly look at your attitude, words, and actions during these times. If you detect a demonic stronghold in your life, repent and ask God to deliver you from that spirit, so that you can receive inner healing through the power of Jesus Christ.