

Chapter 8

“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil ... praying at all times in the Spirit.”

—Ephesians 6:10–18

During this time in human history, Satan and his evil team have travel privileges. They go to and fro on the Earth using various means to discourage, tempt, and disrupt—costs still being felt from the apple-biting disobedience of Adam and Eve. Satan’s abilities are limited, and our Father has him on a leash. Evil continues, but only so far. Some day, when Jesus returns, all creation will be changed, and Satan and his team will be cast away into a lake of fire forever.

But on this day in Eagle Pond, Satan continued to wreak havoc from his regional headquarters in the Neighborhood Bank. Many offices play cheerful music in the background as the day moves along. Here, in Ed’s office, there is no music, only the ongoing hum of complaining and whining, usually centralized at Ed’s desk. Satan loved to hang out nearby. The complaints rang out like music to his ears.

“Can you believe the irresponsibility of these people?” Ed began, speaking so that other desk-dwellers nearby could participate.

“Crazy,” another added. “People expect us just to give away money, throwing out loans like parade candy. Do you have another defaulter?”

The economy had been harsh to farmers the last few years. Land values had soared, but prices for corn and beans had fallen by half or more. Farmers who took out loans to buy land found themselves with empty billfolds at harvest time while trying to make payments to bankers pressured by profit-driven board members.

“Yep,” replied Ed. “I think I know this old lady, too. She lectured me the other day for not ringing a doorbell at the Olson place. She’s a wild nut case, that one. Now I see that she is stealing money from our bank. But justice is on the way. She has missed two farm payments in a row and ignored our warnings. It is time to foreclose her property and take away her farm. Well, I guess I will show her that I can ring a doorbell,” Ed smiled at the thought of it.

It didn’t take long for Ed to make the drive to Carly’s place, a few turns in town and a half mile on gravel, just north of the meat-packing plant. He pulled into Carly’s driveway, got out, and took

a look at his car to see if any rocks had spit up from his tires and dinged the paint job. He hated driving on gravel.

“Dumpy little town,” he muttered. He had hoped for a position in Des Moines or Minneapolis by now, but the waiting continued. Perhaps a few more well-handled foreclosures would get his boss’s attention.

Satan was along for the ride, and he grinned at Ed’s assessment of this Iowa town. He enjoyed Ed’s company, and he looked forward to witnessing the destruction of morale that would come with Ed’s visit.

Ed rang the doorbell. “See,” he thought with sarcasm, “I am a professional, capable of doing my job.”

Carly glanced out the window, recognized Ed and wondered, *What does he want?* “Yes, may I help you?” she asked, opening the screen door.

“My name is Ed Blither and I am here on bank business,” the banker announced, a note of pride oozing in his voice. “I have an official letter for you. Please sign here that you have received it.” Ed handed Carly the clipboard and pen.

Carley signed, accepted the letter.

“Have a nice day,” Ed concluded, then retreated down the steps.

He knew that the letter would *not* give her a nice day, but it seemed like a polite way to end a conversation. He wished that he could see Carly’s reaction as she read the letter but settled for imagining the shock and pain to follow. As Ed drove back to his office, he smiled.

So did Satan.

“Noooo!” Carly, shocked, slumped into a metal kitchen chair, the open letter in her hand. Absorbing the life-changing news was hard. “They can’t take the farm! I thought I had been making the loan payments to the bank!” The print on the page in her hand said otherwise. “Oh please, God, I don’t want to lose my home and the farm. Please help!”

God’s help was requested in East Africa, too.

As Jay biked to another funeral, he prayed and hoped that Gremma’s prayer communication was online today. Jay attended about one funeral a month in his East African community, compared to about one a year when he lived in the USA. It never got easy.

The setting on the big screen in Theater One resolved back to Eagle Pond and the lime-green rocking chair. Empty. It was Thursday morning, so Gremma was under a hair dryer at Shirley's Snips. The unlimited camera coverage of Heaven panned to Main Street, then inside the salon where the whir of the big hair dryers swelled into the soundtrack.

In the theater, the polite slurps of cherry Coke and munches on popcorn quieted as the suspense built with a question in the minds of the theatergoers, *Will Gremma pray?*

Only Jesus knew how Gremma would respond. Jesus loved interceding with God for Gremma and millions of others on the Earth.

Jesus spoke, and the quiet of the theater was complete. "Remember my people, little Christina."

Gremma walked a journey of integrity in her faith—a style loved by Jesus. Even under the hum of the hairdryer, Gremma felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit.

"Dear God," Gremma prayed, "Thank you for your steadfast love that endures forever. I ask you to add more love among the Jaro people today, especially for little Penda, Keeja, and Jay and all of the community attending the funeral. Lord, I know that hope is hard to come by in that village right now, but please change that. May little Penda, especially, feel your love. Amen."

A collective sigh echoed in Theater One. Gremma was plugged in again at infinity G, and her message reached the throne of Jesus. He loved to hear from his children and to act for those who wait for him.

Indeed, the Lord was about to act for his glory and to unfold parts of his plan for the Jaro people.