



Falling Gracefully

Falling leaves. Sunlit golden whispers kissing the grass. A whole palette of colours splashed carelessly by a brush of the wind. Autumn is truly a riot of spectacular hues, but to call it 'The Fall' changes the angle of appreciation. 'Fall' speaks of movement. It creates a picture of colour in motion.

I am told that every leaf on every tree is unique. I watch the tumbling, floating leaves, knowing that each will fall in its own special way according to its special shape and weight and size. Some will be torn from their anchorage by cruel tempests, to be flung into distant, unknown territory. Some will be fall heavy with the weight of morning dew. Others will hold on tenaciously to the last; but most will dance, cavorting gracefully in the breeze, until they lay a russet carpet on the floor of Autumn's ballroom. There is a contentment in their graceful exit, an acceptance that frost, rain and sunshine will crumble them in dust to feed life back into the trees.

The dance of the autumn leaves assures me that in everything there is a greater purpose. There are times when God raises me up. There are times when it seems he lets me fall. Times when it seems he cruelly tears me from my complacent anchorage; but all is well if only I learn to fall gracefully, trusting myself to be carried by his Spirit in this dance of life.

Jim had been back in hospital for a while. I missed our weekly walks around the block. It was not far, but it took an hour. Jim had suffered a stroke and was finding it hard learning to walk again. I sensed it was not the physical movement which was his problem. It was more his lack of confidence. I called to see him the morning after he returned home. Immediately I knew he had changed – his greeting smile was back and his old firm handclasp. There was a new assurance in the way he stood, not grasping the chair-back for support. I had to ask what had happened. He beamed at me. 'I saw a new physiotherapist when I was in hospital this time,' he replied. 'She taught me how to fall! I go down gracefully so I am able to get myself up again.'

As I enter life's Autumn – or is it Fall? - I ask the Lord to teach me to fall gracefully – to be broken in penitence, suffering or ageing in such a way that my falling may give hope and inspiration to all whose lives touch mine.