A Prickly Situation

Cactus make me nervous. When I was small I fell into a cactus and still have a scar from one of the spines in my leg. So I was surprised and pleased when I found that they bloomed. And even smelled sweet. Some of them put out blooms in the evening which are gone by the next day. Most of mine have white blooms, but one is bright red.

Several years ago a friend gave me a cutting, which grew to a lovely, tall straight plant that produced gorgeous scarlet blooms. It grew straight and tall, producing blooms that took your breath away. Several months ago, however, it started leaning. Day by day it seemed to shrink. Maybe I watered it too much. It was bent over and looked like me — needing to be propped up. Unable to do anything about it, I watched as it slowly leaned over just a bit more every day.

When a strong monsoon storm hit, the tips came off, and I thought for sure it was a goner. The wind knocked over the larger cactus beside it, pushing hard against the one spire that was tipped sideways but still fairly straight. Both cactus started wilting.

Every day I checked to see if it the cactus was still standing. Then, one morning, I gazed out by the fence and saw three gigantic blood red blossoms opened to the morning sun. My yard was a mess, the patio covered with leaves and dust, the flower bed barren. Yet there stood that bent and broken cactus, sending out a message to me and all to see that it is still filled with life and beauty.

I no longer look out on that particular patio, but God’s message to me remains the same: No matter how broken we might feel or how bent we might be, God can still use us. I thought of Corrie ten Boom, praying for and forgiving her captors during WW2, bringing new life in Christ to those we deem unworthy. My mind went to Billy Graham, still praying for the world. Closer to home, a precious friend opening her home with gracious hospitality, teaching a Bible Study, praying without ceasing.

That gorgeous bloom lifted my heart and refreshed my spirit. It was a gift of brokenness turned to beauty. God has given me the gift of encouragement. He has blessed me with the ability to put words together that can come alongside and lift up. As long as my eyes can see and my ears hear I best use that gift. I thank God that like that seemingly battered and dilapidated cactus I have a bloom or two left. “The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” Rom 11:29