**Forever Changed**

by Rhonda Wilson

Can you see the change in me? It may not be so obvious to you.

I participate in family activities. I attend family reunions. I help plan holiday meals. You tell me you’re glad to see that I don’t cry anymore.

But I do cry. When everyone is gone…when it is safe…the tears fall. I cry in private so my family won’t worry. I cry until I am exhausted and can finally sleep.

I’m active in my church. I sing hymns. I listen to the sermon. You tell me you admire my strength and my positive attitude.

But I’m not strong. I feel that I have lost control. And I panic when I think about tomorrow…next week…next month.

I go about the routine of my job. I complete my assigned tasks. I drink coffee and smile. You tell me you’re glad to see I’m “over” the death of my loved one.

But I am not “over” it. If I get over it, I will be the same as before my loved one died. I will never be the same. At times I think I am beginning to heal, but the pain of losing someone I loved so much has left a permanent scar on my heart

I visit my neighbors. You tell me you’re glad to see I’m holding up so well.

But I am not holding up well. Sometimes I want to lock my door and hide from the world.

I spend time with my friends. I appear calm and collected. I smile when appropriate. You tell me it’s good to see me back to my “old self”.

But I will never be back to my “old self”. Death and grief have touched my life and I am forever changed.