BELOVED: *Naked*

Years later, she would look back and praise God. But in the moment, as her teenage self, she felt so alone and afraid. Years later, she would marvel at the goodness of God for how He protected her, how her tragic circumstances ended up saving her from a life so much more horrific. But in the moment, to the mere child she was, it felt like the walls of life closing in around, squeezing the very breath from her lungs. She'd never meant for this to happen. But praise God it had!

She was young, dumb and invincible. She defied her parents and went to the party anyway. The next morning when she awoke, discombobulated, in a pool of vomit and blood, alone, afraid and unable to recollect anything, she wished she hadn't disregarded them. And several months later when she realized she was pregnant, she would admonish herself repeatedly for her poor judgment. Suddenly, the cool, elite crowd she always ran with couldn't even remember her name, and as her parents dropped her off at the home for unwed mothers, she realized she had never felt so alone. Or undone.

She'd fight her way back from euphemisms of teenage motherhood, single, no diploma, no future, balancing a kid on one hip. No family to speak of because everyone turns their back on issues they can't sweep out of sight. The blemish an unwanted situation stains relationships with can't be covered up with makeup or a fancy outfit or the poshest of possessions. But God! He comes into the messiest of places, and the brokenness of a heart like a crack in the facade is the perfect place for Him to enter through. He rescued this little girl and her sweet baby boy and set their lonely selves in the kindness of strangers, making a new family. Years later, our girl would go into the prisons to share about the Good News of Jesus, and imagine her surprise when, one by one, she'd minister to the very ones who abandoned her at that first party so long ago. But God! Even though the years had been rough, He'd plucked her out of the dregs of what might have been.

In John 8 (v.1-11) Scripture tells us of a woman who was plucked from an adulterous act, placed, vulnerable and exposed, before Jesus. If she wasn't naked, she might well have been. Every sin laid bare for all to see. The religious sector challenges Jesus about having her stoned due to her actions. Jesus stoops down to doodle in the dirt. I wonder if He was thinking about the very dirt mixed with His Father's breath that had formed mankind. In an extravagant act of grace, He says, "Go ahead, throw a stone, anyone who is without sin," and one by one, her accusers drop the stones they were going to kill her with, and slink away.

When finally, the last person has walked away, Jesus stands. With beloved forgiveness, He says He does not condemn her; then reminds her to go and sin no more. To me that means, there was sin, but He chose to forgive, and therefore, washes away her blemish. What precious love God bestows on us sinners, a love that wipes us clean from all the debris this messy life deposits on us. We are His beloved, which means to be greatly loved!

Jeremiah 31:3 says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."

So, remember, you are chosen and handpicked by God, drawn flawlessly by the flourish of His steady hand.