

Love Moved First Bernie Herms/Matthew West/John-Mark Hall/Seth Mosley

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If you'd like to see hear the song: https://youtu.be/Z8fWD_JpIFg

This is the story of a runaway with no way home and no way out
I threw the best of me away. I had my chance, it's too late now.
Too far gone and too ashamed to think that You'd still know my name.
But love refused to let my story end that way.

Refrain:

You didn't wait for me, to find my way to You. I couldn't cross that distance, even if I wanted to.
You came running after me, when anybody else would have turned and left me at my worst;
Love moved first.

What kind of Grace, relentless Grace, would chase this rebel down?
Crawl into this prisoner's cage, take my hand and pull me out.
You knew I couldn't make the change, so You became the change in me.
And now I live to tell the story, of the God who rescues.

Refrain:

From throne to the manger, from the manger to the grave,
Your cross is the proof, love made the first move.
From a grave meant to keep You, to a stone rolled away,
Your cross is the proof, love made the first move.
I remember how You found me; I'm amazed at where I stand.
Your cross is the proof, love made the first move.

Refrain:

Love moved first...

Luke 15:11-21 The story of the Lost Son: *Then (Jesus) said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.' So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to feel it. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry that he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day. And here I'm starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father I have sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father. When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him. Kissed him."* The Message¹

What parallels do you see between the song and the story of the Lost Son?
Are there parallels to your own story? Describe them.

“This is the story of a runaway, with no way home and no way out.
I threw the best of me away. I had my chance it’s too late now.”

Hosea 8:3 *“But it’s too late! Israel has thrown away her chance with contempt, and now her enemies will chase her.”* The Living Bible²

Jeremiah 15:6 *“You have forsaken Me and turned your backs upon Me. Therefore I clench My fists against you. I am tired of always giving you another chance.”* The Living Bible²

Growing up with these warnings of the times Israel turned away from God, can you see how the Lost Son would have felt he had no choice?

Have you ever been in a similar situation? Felt there was no going back, that you had thrown the best of you away? If you didn’t see that as a parallel, describe that situation now.

“Too far gone and too ashamed to think that You’d still know my name.
But love refused to let my story end that way.”

Acts 5:31 *“God set Him on high at His side, Prince and Savior, to give Israel the gift of a changed life and sins forgiven.”* The Message¹

Luke 5:29-32 *“Levi gave a large dinner at home for Jesus. Everybody was there, tax men and other disreputable characters as guests at the dinner. The Pharisees and their religion scholars came to His disciples greatly offended. ‘What is He doing eating and drinking with misfits and sinners?’ Jesus heard about it and spoke up, ‘Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? I’m here inviting outsiders, not insiders – an invitation to a changed life, changed inside and out.’”* The Message¹

Have you ever thought about Jesus’ explanation that He came for the sick the outsiders? To offer a *“changed life, changed inside and out”*?

If you’ve accepted Jesus’ generous invitation, describe what that acceptance was like for you, and how that has changed your life.

If you haven’t yet accepted Jesus’ generous offer, what do you think it might be like to reach out and take that invitation? To be *“changed inside and out”*? Describe it. If you are ready, accept Jesus’ offer to change your life *“inside and out”*.

Read the refrain 3 times, slowly:

“You didn’t wait for me, to find my way to You. I couldn’t cross that distance, even if I wanted to. You came running after me, when anybody else would have turned and left me at my worst; Love moved first.”

What word or phrase caught your attention? (If one didn’t, read through once more paying attention for a word or phrase.) Does that word/phrase evoke an image or feeling? Describe it. Spend some time with the word/phrase and the image or feeling it evoked. Can you sense a message from God? What is it? How does it make you feel? Reflect on that message over the next few days when you have time.

If you can’t sense a message right now, that’s OK! Hold that word or phrase - and the image or feeling it evokes - close over the next few days. Come back to it when you have some quiet time and ask God to open your heart and mind to what God wants you to take from it.

“What kind of Grace, relentless Grace, would chase this rebel down?
Crawl into this prisoner’s cage, take my hand and pull me out.”

Zechariah 9:11-12a *“And you, because of my blood covenant with you, I’ll release prisoners from their hopeless cells. Come home hope-filled prisoners!”* The Message¹

Romans 2:4b *“God is kind, but He’s not soft. In kindness He takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change.”* The Message¹

God has always rescued those who call for help. List some of the times God’s “relentless grace” rescued you. Don’t feel like there are any? Spend some time with your story, looking for times of unexpected relief and release. Those were the times God was working on your behalf. Take a moment to thank God for taking your hand and pulling you out.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us that God is kind but not soft. Why do you think Paul felt it was important to make that point? Why would softness be a problem when dealing with sin?

“You knew I couldn’t make the change, so You became the change in me.
And now I live to tell the story, of the God who rescues.”

Psalm 34:18 *“The Lord is close to those whose hearts are breaking; He rescues those who are humbly sorry for their sins.”* The Living Bible²

Psalm 71:15 *“I cannot count the number of times when You have faithfully rescued me from danger. I will tell everyone how good You are and of Your constant, daily care.”* The Living Bible²

John 3:17 *“God did not send His Son into the world to judge and condemn the world, but to be its Savior and rescue it.”* The Passion Translation³

Think about it: we have a God who loves us so much, who wants so badly that we be made right with God. Is there any other love that you feel equals this?
What story would you tell of a “God who rescues”?

*“From the throne to the manger, from the manger to the grave...
From a grave meant to keep You, to a stone rolled away,
Your cross is the proof, love made the first move.”*

Psalm 57:3a *“He will send down help from heaven to save me because of His love and faithfulness.”*
The Living Bible²

Mark 16:1-4 *“The next evening when the Sabbath had ended, Mary Magdalene and Salome and Mary the mother of James went out and purchased embalming spices. Early the following morning, just at sunrise, they carried them out to the tomb. On the way they were discussing how they could ever roll away the huge stone from the entrance. But when they arrived, they looked up and they saw that the stone – a very heavy one – was already moved away and the entrance was already open!”*
The Living Bible²

1 Corinthians 6:14 *“God honored the Master’s body by raising it from the grave. He’ll treat yours with the same resurrection power.”*
The Message³

God promised to save us, God fulfilled that promise in Jesus. God broke the hold death has on us when the stone was rolled away from the grave, and Jesus rose. And now we have the promise, as Paul explained in his letter to the Corinthians, that God will treat our bodies to the same resurrection.

What grave do you need God to pull you from in order to resurrect your body? Consider God’s offer through Jesus; offer your needs to God.

“I remember where You found me, I’m amazed at where I stand.”

Ephesians 2:5-7 *“Even though we were spiritually dead and doomed by our sins, He gave us back our lives again when He raised Christ from the dead – only by His undeserved favor have we ever been saved – and lifted us up from the grave into glory along with Christ, where we sit with Him in the heavenly realms – all because of what Christ Jesus did. And now God can always point to us as examples of how very, very rich His kindness is, as shown in all He has done for us through Jesus Christ.”*
The Living Bible²

How can you be an example that God uses? Is there anything holding you back? If there is, offer your reservations to God.

Romans 8:36b-37b *“Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us enough to die for us. For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can’t, life can’t. Angels won’t, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God’s love away.”* The Living Bible²

Nothing we can do or say, or fail to do or say, will separate us from the love of God. Do you believe that for yourself? If you do, take a moment to thank God for this priceless gift. If not, why don’t you? Take a few moments and write these verses on a piece of paper or card to take with you. Read them whenever you get the chance. Use the words as a prayer. Offer your fears, your hesitations about the idea - your disbelief if that’s what you feel – to God. Keep doing this until you begin to believe that “love moved first” for you. Then, keep on believing...

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