



Key Scripture Passages: Romans 8:31-39, Hebrews 7:25

[Slide 1] Part way through today's passage, the Apostle Paul asks the question every single one of us has wondered:

[Slide 2] *Romans 8:35a (NLT) Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love?*

Maybe you haven't asked this question in those exact words. Instead, maybe you have doubted your salvation, wondered if you have done something too horrible, worried you don't pray or study your Bible enough, or found yourself struggling with any of the other thousand fears that whisper in the background of your lives. You want to know you're loved. You want freedom from fear.

In 2001, Elton John released an incredible music video for his song, "I want love." In a surprising move, Robert Downey Jr. was cast to lip sync the song in the music video. Surprising? The movie, Iron Man, came out in 2008, seven years LATER; since then, he has become one of the most popular actors on the planet, but that was NOT the case in 2001. He was just coming off a string of years in which he was arrested multiple times for cocaine, heroin, and marijuana use. His life was out of control. He ended up serving time in prison. He was the picture of a man who had lost everything, who had gone from being the popular one to the one no one wanted to be associated with.

[Slide 3; Elton John, "I want love": <https://youtu.be/ufbexgPyeJQ>]

The timing of the video was powerful, Downey's performance was perfect – you could feel the longing watching him mouthing these words as he walked through an empty house. The symbolism was hard to miss. And the song blew up. Why? Because the desire for love resonated with people. We all have that hunger, that need. When God designed us, when He created us, God wired us for perfect love – His love.

The problem is, we live in a broken, imperfect world. Every one of us can point to examples of broken love, hurtful love, love betrayed, love neglected, in our lives. Because we're surrounded by brokenness, it's easy

for us to expect the same thing of God that Robert Downey Jr. experienced from the world around him, rejection and isolation. We may not articulate it that way, or even be fully aware of it. But maybe you have found yourself wondering if you messed up one time too many – is it too much for God? Was that the straw that broke the camel's back? If God knows everything about me, every action, every thought, how could God possibly have love for me?

But that's how an imperfect, fallen, broken world handles love: imperfectly, inconsistently, with all of the wrong motivations. It's what the culture we have grown up in has trained us to expect. As we read these verses today, we need to intentionally remind ourselves that these verses are not describing some sort of idealistic vision that isn't actually attainable. Not only is God the only one that can actually deliver on what we're reading, He DOES deliver on it.

[Slide 4] *Romans 8:31-39 (NLT) ³¹ What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³² Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? ³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. [Slide 5] ³⁴ Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.*

³⁵ *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? [Slide 6] ³⁶ (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") ³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

³⁸ *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today [Slide 7] nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*