

# Music and Lyrics, III: “Just Don’t Understand”

Reconnect – February 15, 2009

**Text:** Psalm 73(1-28);

**Key Thought:** When we are finally convinced of God's love for us, then everything else can change.

**Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever. (Psalm 73:26, NLT)**

## Intro: Stupid Money

- *[Play video clip - MTV Cribs with 50 Cent]*
- For those of you that might not know, that was Curtis James Jackson III, aka Fiddy
- One of the top rappers in the world, his is a rags to riches story, coming out of extreme poverty to having wealth and influence today - and along the way, he has played on both sides of the law, dealing drugs, feuding, and getting shot multiple times, all in the public eye
- Why do some people get ahead, even those who seem to play by all the wrong rules, and others don't seem to ever get ahead at all?
- Not just rappers - from sports stars to investment bankers, people are out there getting rich - "everybody wants to get paid" - whether they deserve it, or as it often seems, whether they DON'T
- What kind of upside down world do we live in?
- And why does it seem that instead of God in your life helping you, that He seems like a barrier in your way to that kind of success? What's up with THAT?!?

## Read Text: (Go through it at the same time)

- the experts in my basement call this a wisdom psalm - it's got something it's trying to tell - it's a riddle, it's a parable, it's a puzzle, it's going to take some chewing on to get through it
- Asaph was King David's choirleader - King David, who wrote more than half the songs recorded in the Bible - yeah, that one - but more on him later - let's get to the song, and the big question:

### *Psalm 73 - A psalm of Asaph.*

**Truly God is good to the upright, to those whose hearts are pure.**

**But as for me, I almost lost my footing. My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.**

**For I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.**

- "Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure" - surely God is on the side of the good guys - surely there is order and logic to the world and the way that God works - surely God is on our side and loves us
- "But as for me" - Hebrew word appears four times in the psalm - it's self-disclosure, confession - but this is how it seems to me - but this is how I feel - but this is what I'm seeing
- "prosper" - lit. *shalom* - means peace in Hebrew - but it's representative of everything being right with the world when God's in control - it's normally the righteous, the good people who enjoy shalom - so how do the proud have shalom even with their wickedness?

**They seem to live such painless lives; their bodies are so healthy and strong.  
They don't have troubles like other people; they're not plagued with problems like everyone else.  
They wear pride like a jewelled necklace, and clothe themselves with cruelty.  
These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for!  
They scoff and speak only evil; In their pride they seek to crush others.  
They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut throughout the earth.  
And so the people are dismayed and confused, drinking in all their words.  
"What does God know?" they ask. "Does the Most High even know what's happening?"  
Look at these wicked people – enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.**

- "troubles" - the toil we all share - making a living, getting up in the morning to go to work after staying up late with a sick child or having an argument with our spouse - more month left over than money, bumps in the road, unexpected adversity, getting sick, having their bodies let them down - they don't have any of that
- Not only that, but it's at the expense of others - they're getting rich off exploiting other people (bankers!)
- And worst of all, there's no "fear of God" - they put themselves in God's place, like little gods, boasting in the skies and sending their words all through the earth
- The singer is exploring the flip side of our fascination with celebrities and celebrity culture - reality TV shows to magazines to blogs and TV shows like Entertainment Tonight - we can't get enough of seeing their lives (and Cribs, too!)
- We vicariously compare ourselves to them and try to put ourselves in their shoes - as if by touching them on some level we will gain their "powers"

**Did I keep my heart pure for nothing? Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?**

**I get nothing but trouble all day long; Every morning brings me pain.**

**If I had really spoken this way to others, I would have been a traitor to your people.**

**So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is!**

- Why does he keep going? Why is he still trying to honour God? What's the use in trying to do the right thing, when it so clearly isn't working for him?
- And he's caught between a rock and a hard place, because this is Asaph - David's worship leader - he's the Edge to David's Bono, he's the Paul to David's John - this is the best it's ever been, and he's the one that is supposed to keep the joy express going strong - there's no room for these nagging doubts, not to the people, not now
- So he's got to ask the questions, and look for answers, while keeping it on the DL

**Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked.**

**Truly, you put them on a slippery path, and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.**

**In an instant they are destroyed, swept away by terrors.**

**When you arise, O Lord, you will laugh at their silly ideas,**

**As a person laughs at dreams in the morning.**

- Then one day, "at work", of all places, it dawns on him - it's the long view
- God is in control, and one day everything will be evened up - accounts will be added up, and judgements will be made - and when they fall, there's nothing left
- A-Rod steroid scandal - baseball heroes, Clemens, seeing his opener with the Jays, favourite player, now tarnished A-Fraud/A-Roid - Alex Rodriguez - baseball heroes, people paid millions on millions to be able to hit or throw a baseball - before they were heroes, even when they weren't acting like it, now they are fallen - but God's grace is still available to them
- Things can change so quickly, and the top of the heap becomes the bottom in a heartbeat - just like the celebrity machine, when it turns against a celeb - look at poor Jessica Simpson and the treatment she's now getting from the tabloids that she made so much money for

**Then I realized that my heart was bitter, and I was all torn up inside.**

**I was so foolish and ignorant – I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.**

- "bitter" - literally, "soured" - rotted out from the insides - that kind of bitterness, that kind of jaundice spreads, when everything we see starts to become clouded by our heartbreak, by our troubles

**Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, But God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.**

- But God never gave up on him - ever - God's faithfulness endures
- heart - four times through (in yellow - did you catch it?)
- it's a matter of the heart - maybe it's time to reformulate the question
- Really - a question of the heart - repeated x number of times in the psalm, over and over again
- **Reformulate: it's not "Why are they getting ahead" - the question is really, "Do you love me?"**
- If you loved me, I would be happier/richer/healthier/more popular/taller/have better hair/etc. - so, you must not love me
- It's a security issue - am I loved? am I wanted? or am I abandoned/unloved/unwanted?
- Asaph takes the bigger view, and says "yes" - I am loved, I am accepted, I belong to Him - and that makes all the difference - he says that he's going to hold onto God, no matter what - he's desperate for God in his life, to hold on with both hands
- This is the most beautiful part of the psalm for me - sometimes I ask a lot of questions, and I make a lot of wry comments in God's direction - and often I don't listen, and I'm hardened and calloused, and I don't do the right thing the first time, it takes me a few tries
- But when it comes down to it, these words are in my heart: "Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail - and it has - and my spirit may grow weak - and it does - but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever - and he will, because He's everything to me and I'm nothing without Him, nothing at all
- I find myself in moments of doubt, moments of stress, moments of pain, reaching out for Jesus, because He's all I've got, and he's all I need

**Those who desert him will perish, for you destroy those who abandon you.**

**But as for me, how good it is to be near God!**

**I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter,**

**And I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.**

- "But as for me" - we've come full circle with the way he sees it - and his perspective has been changed because of the time that he spent with God
- He asked God the questions, spent the time listening and pouring out his heart to God, and God met him and spoke deeply into his soul - and he walks away changed and ready to share that change with others

### **Key Thought:**

When we are finally convinced of God's love for us, then everything else can change.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

**(John 3:16-17, MSG)**

### **Conclusion: Valentine's Day**

- a multibillion dollar industry designed to do just that - convince people that they are loved - but Jesus does it through a cross - "this is love" (can't remember the quote)
- Why do we need Valentine's day? Because in the busyness and stress and troubles that we face every day on all sides, sometimes we can forget that we're loved - we know in our heads - most of the time - but it seems to leak out of our hearts, and we need that reminder
- Do you need that reminder today? Maybe the question that we've talked about this morning isn't your question - maybe you have another one, just as pressing, just as perplexing - or maybe this IS your question, and you're still not sure - "Does God really love me?"
- Does He really love me when I've done this? When I was that way in the past? When I used to do this - when I did that just this morning? Could He ever really love me, when I'm not even sure a lot of days if I love myself or not?
- God's greeting card is larger than the average one - it's a Bible, and when you look through its pages, you find love again and again, like a highlighter jumping off page after page
- We are loved enough that Jesus died for us - so that no-one would be lost if God could help it, including the ones who are the oppressors, the wicked, those who lord it over everyone else
- God's grace is always available, always at work on us - if you've never felt His love, ask Him to show you this week - get alone with God - go on a date with Him, even - and listen, and learn, and let Him pull you close - and watch how everything changes

**Response: BB King/U2 - "When Love Comes To Town"**