

**Occasion:** Christmas Day 2009

**Text:** Isaiah 62:10-12

**Title:** "Rejected-NOT"

### **Introduction:**

Ray Bradbury is one of those rare individuals whose writing has changed the way people think. His more than 500 published works -- short stories, novels, plays, screenplays, television scripts, and verse -- exemplify the American imagination at its most creative.

His best-known and most beloved books -- *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Illustrated Man*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *Something Wicked This Way Comes* -- are masterworks that readers carry with them over a lifetime. His timeless, constant appeal to audiences young and old has proven him to be one of the truly classic authors of the 20th Century -- and the 21st.

In an 2003 interview, Bradbury was asked: How long did it take for you to get where you are today? It took me roughly 30 years. It was a long, slow process with a thousand rejections. I'm still getting rejected this late in time.

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/writers/writerdetails.asp?cid=89682>

For writers, dealing with rejection is common. Barbara Brenton writes:

My teacher, however, was a professional. He swallowed his wounded pride and sent his story out again. And sent it out yet again. By the time he'd garnered 22 rejections, the editorial staff at the prestigious literary magazine had changed and he sent the story back. And they rejected it again. Stalwart writer that he is, my teacher continued to study his markets and kept his story circulating. After its 41st rejection, the staff of the prestigious literary magazine once again changed hands. My teacher, ever a man to recognize an opportunity, fired his story back out them and, lo and behold, on its 42nd try, his short story was accepted.

"Brilliant!" the acceptance letter read. "Where have you been hiding?"

<http://www.booktalk.com/Column6.html>

### **Setting:**

The people of Judah and Jerusalem to whom the prophet Isaiah wrote were certainly familiar with that feeling of rejection. Those who were taken into exile after the defeat and destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, lived in despair

and shame. Like a child that is disciplined, they could only hope that somehow they might find their way back into the "good graces" of God. Would God, Who had allowed them to be defeated and deported, ever look with favor upon them again? Was there any reason to hope their lives would change for the better, and their future would be blessed again?

### **I. GOD'S RENEWING LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL:**

What was the purpose for God allowing His people to be defeated by the Babylonians? Why did God allow Jerusalem to fall and His Own Temple destroyed? Had God really "Rejected" Israel? Was there no hope of His ever blessing them again?

**TIME OUT:** Perhaps the best way of understanding what happened to the people of Judah and Jerusalem is to compare their experience to what happens when a parent disciplines a child with a "Time Out". When the child misbehaves, the parent sends the child to the "Time Out" chair or corner. The "Time Out" shows the child that his behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated by the parent. The "Time Out" also gives the child time to think about his misbehavior and his need to change, to do what is appropriate and good. The "Time Out" also offers hope. It actually says, "I love you" because the "Time Out" is just that. The "Time Out" is temporary. It will come to an end. Either because it is a set time of limited duration by the parent, OR, because the parent has left the duration to the child, "*Sit in that chair until you are ready to apologize and behave properly.*"

In effect, God gave Israel a "Time Out". They had misbehaved in the sins of idolatry, corruption, immorality, abuse of power, lack of compassion for the poor. They had compromised the faith, mixing the dirt of their selfish desires with the purity of the demands of God's Law. And when you mix dirt with clean water you end up with? —> Mud! So, in exile, the people of Judah were allowed by God to wallow in the mud they had mixed for themselves. And you know what? —> They decided that they did not like living in the mud! They repented before the Lord for their compromising and corrupt ways. They learned their lesson.

The good news is that "Time Outs" have an end! God had also told His people through the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>4</sup>"Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame.

Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.

You will forget the shame of your youth

and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.

<sup>5</sup>For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—

the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit— a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God.

<sup>7</sup>“For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

<sup>8</sup>In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD your Redeemer. – *Isaiah 54:4-8*

Thus, God would end the “Time Out” for His people. In love He would restore them and bring them back from exile to the own land. With God’s renewing love and kindness, as they again lived in Jerusalem and Judah, we read in the text:

<sup>12</sup>You will be called “God’s Holy People,”

“The People the LORD Has Saved.”

Jerusalem will be called “The City That God Loves, ”

“The City That God Did Not Forsake.” – *Isaiah 62:12*

## II. GOD’S RENEWING LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE TODAY, THE CHURCH:

As we look at the people of Judah, we see ourselves. Sometimes people have asked me, *“Why study the Old Testament? The names of many of the places and some of the people are so strange. The time was so long ago, the culture so different than ours. What good is it to take the time to learn about Israel?”* But the answer is simple, As we look at the people of the Old Testament, as we look at Israel, we so often see our own selves.

The world today is full of the rejection of God, rejection of God’s Will for man and rejection of God’s Word. In general, people today look at God as a relic of primitive culture with no relevance for modern society. As for God’s Word, they say it is unreal in its expectations, to harsh, to rigid. So, here the world sits, wallowing in the mud. Ever since Adam and Eve turned away from God and put their faith in the lie of the devil, all their descendants have been wallowing in the mud.

Now, there are those who like the mud. They don’t want to be clean. It’s more fun to play in the mud. They would rather live in the selfishness of their sin and go their own way, whatever the consequences, than leave the mud. Until they get sick of the filth, if ever, they are just going to continue to wallow in the mud.

But the Good News is, that this world ruined by sin, is on one big “Time Out” from God. God has not rejected mankind! God has not forsaken what He has made. Since Adam turned away from God in sin, God has put Adam all his descendants on a “Time Out” for their misbehavior.

As we celebrate Christmas today, we see God’s love in action. In the person of Jesus, we see God coming to lead His people out of the mud. Jesus came in purity and holiness into a world full of people covered with mud. Yet, Jesus Himself never got dirty, He never compromised, never sinned. He lived the pure and clean life we all should live as God’s creation. Yet, Jesus took the guilt for our filth and mud upon Himself to receive the punishment we all deserve.

Now, whenever we are ready, whenever we are willing to come to God and apologize and say we are sorry for our sinful behavior, because of Jesus, our “Time Out” can come to an end. God will forgive us. God will restore us! God will renew us in His love! We can live now, in this life, in this world, as a child of God. We can be transformed by His Spirit and guided by His Word, to live clean and pure lives. We can live in hope as we await the return of the Lord and the full blessings of His Kingdom of Light. Like Israel, we can leave behind the land of exile and return to the land that God has given us. We can hear those words of God spoken to us:

<sup>12</sup>You will be called “God’s Holy People,”

“The People the LORD Has Saved.”

Jerusalem will be called “The City That God Loves, ”

“The City That God Did Not Forsake.” – *Isaiah 62:12*

### Conclusion:

Christmas, the birth of the Savior, is the Good News that God has not rejected you, not forsaken you! You don’t have to feel like the writer who is constantly rejected by publishers. No! God wants you! God desires you! In Jesus, God comes to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. Jesus comes to cleanse you from the filth of the mud of all Adam’s descendants are wallowing in. Jesus comes to free you from all the filthy and selfish ways of the world, that you can be clean and live in a real, genuine, loving relationship with God and with others. Jesus comes to say, *“The ‘Time Out’ is over. Whenever you are ready, you can come back to God. You don’t have to continue to sit in the ‘Time Out’ chair.”*

You can live that Good News! You can share that Good News, especially when someone is overwhelmed with the mud and the filth of this world. You can say, *“Are you tired of living in the mud? Sick of the filth? Want to get out of it all? Get up off the ‘Time Out’ chair and return to God. Find real peace, real hope, and a new way of life—out of the mud!”*

Yes, the world is a mess. Yes, God is giving us a “Time Out”. But, is the world forsaken by God? Are we rejected? In the birth of Jesus and the gift of His Son, God says to you, to me, to the world, “Rejected by Me? NOT!” AMEN