



# REVOLUTIONARY

*THE MARK OF A GODLY  
MISFIT IN THE MAKING*

*BY TITO SOTOLONGO*

## Dedication

To my amazing wife and three boys. Alisha, no one human being has left their mark on me more than you have. Thank you for loving me and for giving me the honor of loving you back!

To my three boys: Josué, Josiah, & Jeremiah. As your dad, I'm supposed to teach you how to become men of God, but it is amazing how much God has used you three to help me grow closer to Him and become a better man. I have not been a perfect father, yet I hope that you were able to encounter your Heavenly father through me. You all have left your mark on me, and I can't wait to see what kind of unmistakable misfits you will become for the glory of Jesus Christ. Be strong & brave.

I love you all with all my heart – 617

## Introduction

The nation had been laid to waste for over seven years by foreign invaders from the east. Like a raging current of water from a broken dam, the land, and all its inhabitants had been plundered and pulverized because the nation had broken its covenant with their God. The people were forced to abandon their homes and hide in caves because there was no way to oppose their oppressors. They had no security, no produce, no cattle, no food, no freedom, and no hope. In their most desperate hour, they called on the name of the Lord, repenting of their wickedness. That is when God responded in an unlikely way.

When the time had come, the angel of the Lord came down among the people, settling under an oak tree. There was a man, who was cowardly threshing wheat in a wine press. Normally this activity was done in the field so that the wind could separate the wheat from the useless chaff. Yet, this man was hiding, not wanting to be noticed by the Midian overlords. It was there in a pit of fear and despair that the Heavenly visitor spoke to this spineless farmer and said...

***“The Lord is with you, valiant warrior.”***

*Judges 6:12 CSB*

This story of Jewish history is found in the book of *Judges* chapter six. The period of the Judges was a chaotic time, full of ups and downs, resembling a vicious cycle. The people of Israel would abandon their God and backslide in their faith, usually including the worship of false gods from the surrounding regions. After finding themselves conquered and oppressed, they recognized the errors of their ways and repented to God, who would send a “judge” to rescue Israel and be their leader for a time. This cycle would continue through the era of the kings until the nation was eventually occupied and then disbanded throughout the neighboring nations.

It was at the beginning of this cycle that we see the Angel of the Lord, which many theologians believe to be Jesus himself, calling the most unlikely of individuals to make a difference. Gideon’s response to God’s proclamation from the winepress shows us that he was

### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

in a spiritual pit as well. The walls of insecurity that surrounded him kept him from recognizing who his divine visitor was. The walls of doubt made it hard to understand why God would allow all this negativity to consume the nation. Like most of the people, he too was blind to the fact that they had dug this pit of anguish with their rejection of God and His ways. They were in a prison that they had built themselves, one sinful brick at a time.

Just like Moses' interaction with God at the burning bush, God reassured Gideon that he would be with him. So, by faith, Gideon climbed out of the pit and gave a large meal as an offering to the Lord. Jesus accepted the offering and disappeared in a way that would have made David Blain jealous. This opened Gideon's eyes to the true nature of his honored guest. After spending time in worship, Gideon got up and tore down both the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole that was found on the land owned by his father. Baal was a Canaanite god of fertility and prosperity. This was a false god that promised life yet brought death. The worship of this demon god included, but was not limited to, public sexual orgies, the use of human excrement, and the sacrificing of children. These were activities that more than likely had occurred on Gideon's property. God wanted Gideon to understand that before he could solve the external problems in his society, he had to address the internal issues of his soul. God always works from the inside out.

The story culminates in a conflict between 300 soldiers that remained from the original 30,000 that had presented themselves for war. God wanted to put his full glory on display to help the people of Israel remember once again that there was none other than their God. All Gideon and his 300 had to do was surround the Midianite camp with a trumpet in one hand and a clay jar in the other which contained a lit torch. The surround sound effect of trumpets blasting, jars shattering, and torches waving in the middle of the night caused the Midian army to awaken from their sleep in such terror and confusion that they attacked each other while Gideon and his followers watched before finishing the job. God had brought deliverance to Israel. But unfortunately, Gideon's selfishness and pride eventually laid the foundation for the cycle to repeat itself.

## *Now what?*

One major takeaway is to know that Jesus was the better Gideon, who was willing to be crushed on the cross, like grapes in a winepress, to pay the penalty for our sins. Unlike Gideon, Jesus single-handedly conquered the devil and his army by the power of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Good News (trumpet) and by loving broken people (clay jars and torches). He is the most radical and noble warrior there ever was. Fast forward to today, and the Lord is looking for valiant warriors to stand in the gap for a world that is slipping into darkness.

Israel's societal fall always began with a spiritual falling away. The priests would abandon true worship and fail to uphold God's Holy Word. That is exactly what is happening now, as we are watching cultures collapsing all around us because they are built on a foundation of sand. And apparently, the Church is no different. Statistics show that there is little to no difference between how Christians who attend Church semi-regularly live compared to non-Christians. The most popular sermons that come from America's pulpits are more about our purpose than the person of Jesus Christ. The power of God has been replaced with popularity as people both in and outside of the Church care to only hear what makes them feel good rather than encountering the Truth of the goodness of God.

As COVID-19 swept across the world in early 2020, the responses by many politicians and the average person have led to economic collapse, scarcity of resources, and a socially distant populace that is struggling physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. In this environment, we see much of God's people, like Gideon, treading in wine presses, afraid to speak the truth, out of fear that they will be the next one to be crushed or canceled by the outrage of the mob. It is to those that God is now speaking, "The Lord is with you, valiant warrior."

Just as Gideon saw God thin out the army from 30,000 to 300, I believe God is doing the same with his army today. Church attendance had been steadily dropping from the late 1990s through 2020. The closing and phase re-opening of Churches due to COVID-19 will undoubtedly accelerate this decline. Though many more people who previously avoided religious services are

***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

attending and engaging in Church services online, many of the casual attendees have fallen off. Yet, there is a remnant that is rising. Difficult times tend to reveal our true nature and character. Casual and cultural Christians who were showing little to no fruit are walking away, while the committed few are growing deeper in their faith, as these hard times are forcing them to lean on God on a greater level.

The Lord is now waiting for His faithful few to blow their trumpets, shatter their jars, and shine their light in the darkness! The trumpet speaks of our worship and proclamation of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. The broken jars speak of our need to walk in humility and vulnerability before the Lord. Lastly, the torch speaks of the loving light of Christ that burns through the fire of the Holy Spirit that shines through our lives. That is the formula for freedom; the Gospel lived out in humility through love expressed in words and deeds.

These are the kind of revolutionaries the Lord is looking for. But just like Gideon, God must address our internal issues before we engage external problems because the world will only change to the extent that we allow Christ to change us.

***“We’re here to put a dent in the universe. Otherwise, why else even be here?” – Steve Jobs***

Would you love to change the world and know your life counted for something? Who doesn't? Everyone wants to find their place in the universe and know that in the end, their life mattered. I am sure that at some point you dreamed of instigating something outrageous and beautiful. Many of us do, yet the more we grow up, the more we forget how to dream. The wonder in our eyes fades into the background as our limitations and insecurities increase substantially with every candle that we add to our birthday cakes. The sum of our consequences from our poor choices begins to pile up, making it harder to see over the horizon. Our uniqueness eventually melts away as we begin to fall in line and conform to the expectations

### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

that society, others, and even we start putting on ourselves. When that happens, we end up losing our way in this world instead of finding our place. We begin to wonder, “Is there more to life than this?” C.S. Lewis, a former atheist turned Christian, documented his conclusion to that question in *Mere Christianity* when he wrote, “If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”

Just like a building, you cannot build a person on a weak foundation. In the early years of our marriage, my wife and I had purchased a new bed frame for ourselves. The frame was made of wooden planks that would connect in the middle to support the mattress. After a few weeks, we began to experience a very annoying problem. The planks on the top corner of my wife’s side of the bed would pop out of place, usually when we were sleeping. The mattress would fall to one side, as one plank after another would sequentially dislodge themselves, causing myself and my wife to roll down the bed like a pair of oranges tumbling down a hill. I assumed the frame was defective. It was not. It turns out I failed to fully screw in the top right of the frame. The distance was millimeters, but the difference was immeasurable. We had no more problems after I had tightened up the screws. The foundation of our bed was now secure, and so were we.

Many of the problems we see in our world are because our foundation is off. Sin has separated us from God, thus causing the world not to function properly the way my bed did. Even a little separation makes a big difference. We see societies and individuals consistently do the following. They replace God for the government as their foundation. They exchange God’s sovereign rule with mankind’s selective rule. Lastly, they swap God’s time-tested principles with progressively shifting opinions. The structural integrity of a culture can never be strong if the Truth matters less than what trends. These are all signs of an age-old revolution that has been waging since the Garden of Eden. All revolutions are about toppling a ruling authority in a battle for control. Now here we are, finding ourselves caught in the middle of this war that is bigger than politics. It is between light and dark, truth and lies. It always has been.

## *Psalms 1 (ESV)*

*1 Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.  
3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.  
4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.  
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;  
6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

The book of Psalms is an incredible collection of poems, lyrics, and thoughts that are packed with emotion and wisdom. We see the psalmists wrestle with the world and with themselves as they seek to remain faithful to God. This first Psalm is a great introduction and preamble for the remaining 149 Psalms. In this one, we see how the Psalmist is contemplating the lives and legacy of the two groups of people that exist; those who seek after God and those who seek ways on how to avoid Him. The godly are compared to a tree; strong, permanent, beautiful, useful, and fruitful. The ungodly are compared to chaff which has no roots compared to a tree, causing them to be blown around by the wind, constantly influenced by external forces that fail to bring fulfillment.

Notice the progression in Psalm 1:1 of walking, standing, and sitting. We will never experience the blessing that can only be found in a relationship with God if we choose to walk in ungodly ways, stand with ungodly people, and sit complacently in ungodly opinions. This does not mean that Christians should not have relationships with non-Christians. Rather, it is a reminder that God should be the most influential force in our lives. If He is not, something else will be.



### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

This regression of the individual begins when we buy into the enemy's lies. The devil and demons do not possess the power to create anything out of nothing. All they can do is corrupt something. In the garden in Genesis 3, the devil casts doubt on God's character, leading Eve then Adam to rebel against God. Thus, drafting humanity as active participants in the devil's revolution against the supremacy of God. This story reveals to us how Satan likes to change the definition of words and rewrite history (what God had originally said) to manipulate us. This is how he nudged Adam and Eve to view themselves as victims of God's oppression, causing them to assume that He was withholding a great blessing that they deserved to have. This led to their disobedience and rebellion which was the equivalent to treason against God. Darkness still deploys these tactics today. How many times have we seen revolutions begin with someone rewriting the past and casting a shadow of doubt on a nation's foundations by giving words a different definition than they previously had? How many times have we seen the mobilization of the marginalized end with the formerly oppressed becoming the new oppressors? This pattern is found in the history and destiny of every nation because of the sin that resides in the hearts of all people.

Two words that we need to revisit that have been given different definitions are *religion* and *church*. Say the word "religion" and most people will react negatively, even Christians. Many in the Church have proudly declared over the years, "My faith is not about a religion but a relationship with Jesus." Understand that at its core, the word "religion" means a system of belief and worship that is expressed by one's lifestyle. Our relationship with Jesus is made up of a system of belief and actions. Our relationship is our religious expression. A better statement should be, "My faith is not based on empty religious rituals but in a fulfilling relationship with Jesus." Because of the negative connotations of the world *religion*, many tend to reject other words related to the Christian doctrine. This produces many Christians who do not understand even the most basic Biblical terms and definitions that compose their faith system. They choose to settle for a relationship with God that is based on their interpretations of Biblical terms and definitions rather than God's.

Combine this with the growing distrust that people have with societal institutions. The more people discover how corrupt government and politicians are, the less they trust the

***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

system. The same attitude is being projected toward the Church, which has lost its influence in the culture because it has tried to win the world by becoming like it. This is not an attack on the use of modern technology, musical expression, or applying business principles that are rooted in the Bible. The ship that is the American Church has been taking on water over time because it has succeeded in producing fans that like Jesus who build personal castles rather than developing followers that love like Jesus who advance God's kingdom.

Add to this the news headlines of corruption, money laundering, and abuse that is found in a minority of churches and watch how fast the negative label is being applied unjustly to all, contributing to this mass exodus from the Church. But to be fair, there were many times when people walked away from Jesus himself. The unfortunate reality is that weak pulpits are produced by people who "will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear" and not what they need to hear (2 Timothy 4:3 CSB).

This chain of events proves the following statement once again. Bad interpretation of God's Word always leads to a bad application by God's people. Just as soldiers must first be trained before they are sent off to fight, we must take a step back and assess what we believe if we desire to fight the good fight of faith. What is it that we believe? Do we believe it to be true? What is the reason for our hope in Christ? (1 Peter 3:15) Just like Gideon had to tear down the altar of the false god Baal and replace it with an altar for the one true God, we too must begin by tearing down our altars and deconstruct any false narratives through repentance if we wish to establish Christ as our solid foundation.

Remember how Psalms 1 showed us that the advice we follow (walk) produces a pattern of living (stand) that shapes our opinions and desires (sit). I believe this is what Paul was encouraging the Ephesian church to do when he said, "...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19 ESV). The fact is that our lives can only be properly anchored by the

loving nature of God's character and the Truth of His Word. For we cannot fight from a weak foundation of faith or find fulfillment unless we are grounded and rooted in the love of Christ at the center of our lives. Anything else creates a void that has a ferocious hunger that is never satisfied.

## ***Blackholes do not only exist in outer space.***

Just as space abhors a vacuum, so does our soul. According to the laws of nature and physics, empty and unfilled spaces do not exist in nature. But before we look inside of ourselves to address our personal problem, I want to invite you to look up at the stars and reintroduce to you the definition of a particular word. What comes to mind when you read the word *revolutionary*? Maybe you pictured movements that altered society, historical figures that rose to power, or a certain breakthrough in technology that forever altered how we live our lives.

If you did, you would not be wrong. The history of the word *revolution* is usually associated with the word *revolt*. This understanding of the term refers to a sudden or radical change of thinking or living that is fundamentally different from the norm. This can mean an introduction of something completely new, like the invention of the internet, or it can mean a rollback, reset, or return to fundamental principles of the past. I would like you to compare this use of the word *revolution* regarding behavior in society with the way we describe behavior in our solar system.

A *revolution* describes the act of a celestial body completing an orbit around another object in space. It takes the Earth twelve months to complete its orbit, or revolution, around the sun. Thus, a revolution in space is the act of completely revolving around a body that is much larger than itself. A cultural or technological revolution is a radical break of orbit from a way of thinking or doing in an attempt to establish another orbit around a different set of beliefs and behaviors. The question that I want you to consider now is what is at the center of your universe? What is the belief system that you revolve your life around? Look hard because we all have something or someone at the center.

### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

Before the fall, Adam and Eve's worldview revolved around their view of God. Satan's lies pulled on their hearts, throwing them out of their Godly relational orbit. If Earth ever broke off from its current orbit, it would hypothetically float off into space until it came into proximity with something larger than itself, whose gravitational pull would cause the Earth to establish a new orbit around a foreign object at the center. So, if God was no longer at the center of Adam and Eve's existence, what replaced Him? I am going to argue that the absence of the light of God which gave life to mankind created a void that developed into a spiritual black hole.

Every year scientists and astrologists learn more and more about our solar systems. Despite the amount of knowledge that we have uncovered, it is obvious that we have only scratched the surface of the cosmos. One example is the existence and function of black holes. Einstein described that the orbit of an object in space was due to the indentation in the space-time continuum that was created by the larger object. Our sun is so large that it has created a big enough dent in space that is causing each planet in our solar system to revolve around it, like a ball spinning around a funnel. The opposing gravitational pulls that each planet is exerting on each other is what keeps the planets from progressively sliding down the slope and crashing into the sun. That is why each planet is anchored in a stable and predictable orbit.

In comparison, a black hole is not an indentation, but rather resembles a puncture in the space-time continuum. This is thought to be caused by a star that has collapsed in on itself. When this occurs, gravity increases dramatically, causing anything that crosses the edge of the black hole, called the event horizon, to be pulled in. The gravitational force at the center, called *the singularity*, is infinitely strong to the point that an object must be traveling faster than the speed of light to escape its grasp. Thus, the name *black hole* because light itself is sucked into it.

No one knows exactly what would happen to objects that go into a black hole. One theory has to do with the manipulation of information. Everything in the universe is composed of matter, which is information that is organized in a particular shape at the molecular level. This organization tells us how things are different from each other. Consider how coals and diamonds have the same molecular makeup, yet they are different because of how that information is structured. Imagine building a pyramid with one deck of cards and building a

tower with a duplicate deck. Same materials making different shapes. Black holes do the opposite of what we see in the universe by taking different things and making it the same by destroying distinctions as information and matter is ripped apart. Ok, now that we have this galactic image, let us return to the Garden.

***“You will never know the fullness of Christ until you know the emptiness of everything else”***

*C.H. Spurgeon*

I believe that the spiritual black hole that replaced God at the center of humanity at the Fall operates the same way cosmic black holes do. Our souls have been punctured by sin and death in such a way that our hearts and minds are being pulled towards a realm of darkness that consumes the light of God’s truth. The more we surrender and give in to its pull the more our lives and society is ripped apart, and the more rulers strive to shape their subjects into their image and likeness. Truth and distinctions of all kinds are destroyed as the information of who God is, who we are, and how the world ought to be is manipulated. This is the result of an individual or a collective society that is not rooted or grounded in the truth and love of the one true God.

For non-Christians, this vacuum has a strong pull. Promising fulfillment through fame, fortune, or other means. This invitation is deceptive because the sin that initially attracts us eventually attacks us, leaving us emptier than before, yet full of regret, shame, and frustration. This is where I found myself before knowing Christ. I wasted so much time trying to *“find myself”* that I ended up abandoning what made me distinct, causing me to lose myself. One day when I was about seventeen, I found an old book that I wrote as a project back in elementary school. I titled the book, *“The boy with the imagination that went out of control.”*

### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

It was a story of a boy trying to escape the clutches of a mad scientist who wanted to download his consciousness into robots. Both somehow find themselves trapped in the boy's imagination. The first who retrieved the green gem from the dragon's head would be the only one to escape. The two characters then warped from one situation to another, which resembled every videogame I had own up until then. In the end, the boy (really me) realized he had been daydreaming the epic tale while reading another book.

In summary, I wrote a book about a boy who was daydreaming of being trapped in his imagination while reading another book. Honestly, the fact that I was not heavily medicated and sedated as a kid still surprises me. As I read this book, I felt like I was looking into a mirror. The problem was that I did not even recognize myself. The boy who wrote this story was bold and secure of himself, unlike my seventeen-year-old self. I had changed so much in just the span of a few years, and it was not for the better. This was the result of having a spiritual void in my soul.

Because of this emptiness, many make their personal experience the center of their being. They base their truth by what they have encountered, leading them to believe their truth is superior to another's experience. Others try to address the devastating and unjust consequences of this hollowness by placing blame on societal systems while completely ignoring the role they played in contributing to such a system. Sin is seen as selective and truth becomes relative. That is how you build a life and a nation on shifting sand. The warning of the Psalmist rings true, that if God does not fill our void, something, or someone else will.

This phenomenon also occurs in a Church where one's prideful perspective, political ideology, or cultural identity resides at the center rather than Christ. People misinterpret the Bible by believing that they are the heroes or the victims of the stories rather than recognizing that all of Scripture ultimately points to Jesus. (John 5:39) In other cases, we see how the faith of some ends up revolving more around spiritual gifts rather than the gift giver. Some even place a greater emphasis on knowing their calling rather than knowing the God who is calling them. Others exalt the nature and range of their intersectionality (different levels of discrimination) as holy rather than the nature of God. As a result, they require others to adhere to a form of continual repentance and penance that cannot bring salvation or transform hearts.

***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

Yes, God’s heart breaks when people are broken, especially when those who know better do not do better. Yet, this narcissistic exposition of Scripture eventually produces a false Gospel that produces injustice in the name of justice and self-righteousness in the attempt to be righteous. The bad apples are plucked from the tree, all while the rotten roots of sin remain in our hearts. Nothing will change until we begin to change how we see God, and it starts with His Word. The Bible is ultimately a book about God, showing Christ as the hero, that searches our souls as we search the Scriptures, edifying our hearts with a Truth that seeks to destroy any remaining lies that lie in our heart (Hebrew 4:12).

***“Please sir, may I have some more?”***

*– Oliver Twist, written by Charles Dickens*

Just like a real black hole, this spiritual void consumes mercilessly yet it is never full. Charles H. Spurgeon spoke of this condition when we wrote, “You say, ‘If I had a little more, I should be very satisfied.’ You make a mistake. If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.” Spurgeon points to both the problem and the solution when we also stated, “I have a great need for Christ: I have a great Christ for my need.” We are not smart enough, strong enough, or good enough to break free from the pull of death and hell. But Jesus is!

The rescue mission for humanity began with a covert operation, as Jesus entered this world without fan fair as a baby. He lived the life we couldn’t live and suffered the penalty for sin that we should’ve received. This culminated with Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus suffered temporarily for us so that we wouldn’t have to suffer eternally without Him. The act of His resurrection means that He was mighty enough, holy enough, and worthy enough to enter the black hole of death and come back! In doing this, He proved that He was God by paving a path with His blood for us so that we could return into a proper orbit around Himself.

## ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

The force of God's merciful love is the only thing that is keeping us from slipping over the edge. Two revolutions occur when we place our faith in Christ. We are radically changed by regeneration, going from enemies of God to children of God, as we revolt against the devil, all while learning to establish a new relational orbit around God. This is what happened to me, and countless others, who have placed their trust and confidence in Jesus. Because without Jesus coming back to life there would be no Christian religion or Bible. Don't believe me? Just ask Paul (1 Corinthians 15:1-11).

This understanding could have kept so many people from rejecting the Christian faith that they once possessed. One key reason people deconstruct their faith is because they settled for a routine instead of a relationship. Others have walked away because they had made the Bible the foundation of their faith. That is why there is such an attack on the validity of Scripture. If you can get someone to doubt someone of God's Word, you can easily get them to doubt all of it. Yet, the remarkable reality was that the early church had radical faith in Jesus all while not possessing a Bible like the kind we have today.

The New Testament was written because first-century Christians believed Jesus had risen. The resurrection is the true foundation of our faith. That miraculous moment is what validates the Scriptures and makes this revolution possible. Once we revolt in repentance and begin to revolve our faith around Christ, just like Gideon did when he replaced the household altar of Baal with one for the Lord God, we can now shift our focus on becoming the right kind of revolutionaries.

## ***A revolution involves a resetting of faith and life.***

Just as the spiritual black hole replaced mankind's initial and central relationship with God, we must be intentional in progressively revolving our lives in a way that is anchored in Christ. This is exactly what happened during the Protestant Reformation of the 1,500's. The



### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

Church had been co-opted and corrupted by power and influential personalities, causing it to be the Church in name only and not in its nature. A few brave souls, the revolutionaries of their time, called that the church to reform its foundation on what is described as the *Five Solas*.

The Medieval Catholic Church promoted the principles of salvation by faith plus works, grace plus merit, by Christ plus other mediators, according to Scripture plus tradition, all to the glory of God plus the saints. The Reformers rather called the Church back to the Biblical basics of salvation by faith alone, grace alone, in Christ alone, and Scripture alone, all for the glory of God alone. This regenerated life is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit of God alone that gives us faith, dispenses grace, reveals Christ, illuminates the Scriptures, and empowers us to glorify God! The revolution that was the Protestant Reformation is by no means the only example in Biblical or Church history. The truth remains, that when the true Church stands up, darkness will try to oppose it. Yet the result is always the same. The Light of Christ reflected in His Church always triumphs over darkness. Like so many who have come before us, we must choose for ourselves who we will be today.

## ***Not me!***

My family was a witness to how fast an entire nation can collapse in on itself, all while creating a hole of hopelessness and misery. The promises of the Cuban Revolution came with a high price that has proven not to be worth the cost. I had a grandfather who had worked his way up to become the Head of the National Bank of Cuba, becoming one of the highest-ranking public servants in the country, aside from the military and those in Fidel Castor's circle. My family had been passive during the revolution. Though they were not opposing or supporting Castro, they knew things needed to change, and they did in a way no one had imagined.

After witnessing horrific mismanagement, corruption, theft, and murder, my grandfather wanted to leave his country and go to America. This was enough for him to be sent to a labor camp for reeducation, not because of the color of his skin but because of the thoughts in his head. He told me of the broken men and women at the camp who had no light in their eyes or

hope in their hearts. After observing those surrounding him, he told me that he said to himself, “Not me.” He formalized a plan and succeeded in escaping, along with a handful of men. That is exactly the kind of revolutionaries we need to see today. Men and women who are seeing society go over the cliff beyond the event horizon and say to themselves, “Not me!” The world needs a misfit Church that purposefully looks to save others at the expense of their comfort or image.

## ***When life gives you lemons...plant a seed.***

True Jesus followers understand that the legacy they leave behind is the work of God. Just as we can count the number of seeds in a piece of fruit but not the potential number of fruit that a seed can produce, we cannot fathom the wave that can result from the ripple that is caused when a person receives Christ as the rock of our salvation. This reminds me of my other grandparents on my mother’s side. They were farmers in Cuba who had much of their land confiscated by Castor’s Communist regime. After a decade of suffering under socialism, they bravely took their family to California with no money and no ability to speak English. There they worked hard and were fortunate to start a business and buy a house within a short amount of time. At that house, my grandmother planted a tiny lemon tree.

After a few years, my mother and her family left California for Tampa, FL where she eventually met and married my father. After about forty years, my mother had the chance to return to California for the first time since they had left. The current owner of her childhood home was kind enough to allow my mother to come inside. Waves of memories and emotions washed over my mom’s heart with each step she took throughout the house. She eventually made it to the back yard. That is when she saw it. The tiny lemon plant that my grandmother planted had grown into a towering tree that held up bright yellow lemons that shined like gold nuggets in the California sun.

***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

I compared the picture of my grandparents when they first planted the tree in the late 1970s with the current picture that my mother took in 2014. It was amazing for me to think about how a family is still enjoying the lemons from my grandmother's tree, even though she died in 2013. That is exactly what the legacy of a Godly revolutionary is. Even though a seed is dead, it comes to life and produces fruit when it is buried in the ground, watered, and given sunlight (John 12:24). Godly misfits go from being dead in their sins to alive in Christ and go off to produce fruits as their sin is buried by the blood of Jesus, while their souls are watered by the water of the Gospel and fueled by the light of God's love. You can account for the life of one individual, but you cannot begin to imagine the countless of lives still yet to be born that will be blessed by God's grace through just one of His misfits.

***“The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him”.***

*- D.L. Moody*

This is the character trait of the heroes of our faith that are found in the Scriptures. The author of Hebrews reflects on these Godly misfits who lived their lives with an eternal perspective and hope. They became steppingstones of faith that lead the way for others who would come behind them. What is notable is how the revolutionaries of the Bible did not change the world because they had great faith. Their lives continue to change the world because they had faith in a great God. They were never the same after having encountered the Lord. No one ever is. We too can look back and learn from this great cloud of witnesses to help us understand a key element of possessing a revolutionary faith that produces a revolutionary life.

### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

Earth's orbit and the lives of those in the Bible have in common, imperfection. Our planet's revolution is an oval and not a perfect circle. This is what causes the change in seasons that we experience. In the same way, no one can perfectly revolve their heart, soul, mind, and strength around Christ.

That is why a Godly Misfit is always someone who is in the making, constantly being made new in Christ, because there remains a pull from the old self that contrasts the pull of God's love that desires to lead us into the new self (Ephesians 4:22-24). Just like the change in seasons bring rest and renewal to the world, we too must be continually renewed in a growing relationship with God. This includes growing in holiness and sanctification as we come to know and reflect Christ. It includes growing in our devotion to prayer, the Scriptures, and the presence of God. Lastly, it also includes learning to better walk in step with the Holy Spirit both individually and collectively with the saints (other Christians). The above mentioned lifestyle is an indirect result when we focus directly on God's great *Agape* love for us!

A.W. Tozer once said, "We have as much of God as we actually want." That is precisely why we need a renewed desire to continually know the love of Christ and make Him known. Because the more we revolve our entire selves around God in this way they more He will revolutionize our prayers, words, and actions and produce remarkable results. The love of God for us is what fuels are love for Him and others. (1 John 4:19) The fact is that we get better at life with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives. That does not mean we will get everything right or that nothing will ever go wrong. Humbly placing Jesus on the throne of our souls in surrender positions us to grow in following His lead through the power of the Spirit in every area of our lives.

Just like in Gideon's midnight stand against the Midianites, we too can walk in victory, no matter how difficult our circumstances. As clay jars, we must hold the trumpet of praise in one hand and lift the light of the Gospel in the other. Demons have no defense for this, for it is by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony that we will overcome (Revelations 12:11).

***“I am not asking whether you know things about Him but do you know God, are you enjoying God, is God the center of your life, the soul your being, the source of your greatest joy? He is meant to be.”***

*- Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Spiritual Depression*

Christians are called to revolve their lives around the ultimate revolutionary, Jesus. His life, heroic sacrifice, and miraculous victory over death is continuing to change the world today. Just like His first disciples, He is inviting anyone and everyone to come and follow Him. The more we walk with Christ, rooted and grounded in His love and Truth, the more our walk and talk will look like Jesus. But, as we press forward, we must have a healthy expectation of what this could look like.

There are many examples of Jesus challenging the status quo and speaking truth to power. Personally, two moments stand out that I believe provides distinctions between a Godly revolutionary versus our modern-day interpretation. Jesus, not once but twice, flipped the tables of the money changers and drove out the “dove-sellers” that were in the Temple of God in Jerusalem (John 2:13-21 and Matthew 21:12-13). In these acts, Jesus exhibited righteous anger and not human outrage. Jesus did not assault anyone physically and for what we can gather, He did not destroy anyone’s property. He simply drove the money changers and sacrificial animal vendors out of the Temple of God, which belonged to Him, making it His private property.

The Temple and its religious system were given by God to be a shadow of what Jesus would eventually usher in through his death and resurrection. The corrupt priesthood allowed money changers to gouge locals and pilgrims by exchanging Roman currency (which bore the image of Caesar) with Jewish coinage that was acceptable for worship and offering. The animal

***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

vendors also profited from those who traveled far distances and could not make the trip with their animal sacrifices. So, they took advantage of their need by overcharging all who would come to worship, even the poor which could only afford doves. That is why Jesus demanded that the people tear the temple down and watch Him rebuild a better one in just three days. His anger and actions were both righteous and justified because He was restoring the Temple's function of being a house of prayer where all people of every *nation* (ethnos = ethnicity) could come and find salvation and hope. Instead, it had become a den of thieves as the money changers were exploiting the rich and the dove sellers were abusing the poor, robbing them of a relationship with God.

One other instance that stands out to me is connected to Jesus' final teaching lesson before celebrating the Passover with his closest disciples in the upper room. The scene was the same, yet the players were not. In Mark 12:41-44, a poor widow catches Jesus' eye as He scans the crowd by the horns that collected people's offerings at the Temple. While everyone was making a show of how much they were giving, which they believed to be a sign that God was happy with them, a widow came and gave two mites, which Jesus made sure to point out to the disciples was all she had to live on. Though this widow is praised by many for her extreme generosity, there appears to be more to the story. Right before her sacrificial act, Jesus had warned his followers about the scribes who uphold an image of holiness but were devouring the estates of widows (Mark 12:38-40).

Jesus wanted to be clear in many different moments that His followers are to live by a different set of rules than those they had previously looked up to. For just like Christ, we live to serve and not be served. In a previous debate with the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus called out their selfish practice of giving the money that was meant to care for their elderly parents as an offering to the Temple. (Mark 7:11-13) It is thought that this sinful tradition was practiced by many. This would leave many widows with no money and no hope. So, the scribes would step in and offer a solution to the problem they created.

They agreed to manage the entire financial estate of any widow as an act of compassion. Instead, they would embezzle funds and abuse the very people they claimed to be serving. After

### ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

issuing a rebuke to the scribes who devoured the estates of widows, Jesus looks up and sees a poor widow, giving all that she had to live on to a system that was robbing her of the rest of her life.

Jesus didn't stand and demand that the scribes and widow be reconciled by redistributing the stolen wealth. He didn't protest or flip any tables this time. He didn't even encourage his disciples to "Go and do likewise" or praise the women in saying, "Your faith has saved you". Jesus pointed out the problem, stood up, and did something about it by dying on the cross to forever dismantle the systematic oppression of sin that has plagued mankind since the Garden. That is our example as Jesus' followers. Our hearts must break for what breaks God's heart.

The resulting compassion should lead us to action by first and foremost proclaiming the freedom and forgiveness of our sins through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If, and when, this leads us to approach and confront people or policies, we must never lose sight that the greatest oppressor is also being oppressed greatly by the blinding burden of sin that is leading them to inflict pain. Reforming society cannot redeem a sinner. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can do both! So, like Jesus, we must always be led by love to love. Godly revolutionaries always see their words and deeds through the lens of the Greatest Commandment, which is to love others and Jesus loved us. (John 13:34) For our love for God is proven authentic through our love for one another. (1 John 4:8) That includes loving our enemies because Jesus first loved us when we were His enemies (Romans 5:10).

Aside from Jesus, Paul gives us a better glimpse of what a Godly misfit looks like in the making. The more Paul walked in relationship with Jesus, the more glorious God became while the less impressive he became. Paul went from describing himself as the least of the Apostles (1 Corinthians 15:9-10) to the least of all the saints (Ephesians 3:8) to the chief of sinners closer to the end of his life (1 Timothy 1:15). The better you know how good God is the more you will realize that you are nowhere near as good as you had originally thought. The Lord does wonders in and through us only by our position as sons and daughters of God, not by our performance. Yes, unrepentant sin and a lack of faith does block God's grace from flowing. Yet, miracles are

***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

not performed through big faith but rather by small faith in a big God (Luke 17:1-6). God's grace is the ultimate force multiplier, that causes us to grow in Christlike nature and number.

**AWAKEN**

*Written in the late 1700s, by Lawrence Tribble*

*One man awake, Awakens another.*

*The second awakens His next-door brother.*

*The three awake can rouse a town*

*By turning the whole place Upside down.*

*The many awake Can cause such a fuss*

*It finally awakens the rest of us.*

*One man up, With dawn in his eyes*

*Surely then Multiplies.*

This poem captures the spirit of America's first great revival. It all begins when we are simultaneously awakened to our great and horrible sin and our great and wonderful Savior. Repentance is what sparks this spiritual revolution in Christ Jesus. With Him at the center, we are called to "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:10 CSB) The more we lead our families to press in and seek the love-filled Kingdom of God above all, the more we come to know the hope we have in Christ, the blessing of participating in the Church, and what the immeasurable greatest of God's power towards us who believe. (Ephesians 1:19) What God provides, no government can give or take away. Mankind can only offer freedom, which is permission to behave a certain way. But in Christ, we have liberty which by grace gives us the ability to live in God's ways regardless of our external circumstances.



## ***“How should we then live?”***

*- Dr. Francis Schaeffer*

It's been said that Gandhi told a group of missionaries, "You Christians look after a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilization to pieces, turn the world upside down and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of literature." That is not how I want to be described. Though I will not be perfect in my attempt, my desire is not to be depicted as one who chose to live for himself, but instead for the glory of God and the good of others. I ask that by God's mighty hand that the prayers I pray on my knees may translate to a life that I live when I stand to my feet. I choose to take the life and liberty that God has given me to pursue every opportunity to know Jesus in a personal way so that he may show Himself through me in a powerful way.

***Revolutionary faith produces a revolutionary life.  
So, here is the bottom line...I pray that God may  
make you a revolutionary like the moon is.***

The moon is a lifeless mass. It completes a revolution around the Earth as it too revolves around the sun. Throughout its solar journey, the moon shines a light that is not its own. One side faithfully faces the Earth, reflecting the rays of light onto those in the dark, while the other side absorbs the blows from rough meteors. In the same way that the moon's presence is essential to life on Earth, the Church is essential to usher hope and eternal life throughout the world. All the moon does is revolve faithfully around the Sun and Earth. To all my fellow Jesus followers, that is all that is required of us, that we live our lives in light of God's love for us and others. As the Church, we are the light of the world because we reflect the light of Christ (Matthew 5:14-15). May we not hide this light or let the love of the world get in the way and

***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

eclipse our love for the world. For when we truly shine in this way, others will see our good deeds and come to recognize our good God (Matthew 5:16).

The hope that we have should influence how we live. Know that we will offend God and do a disservice to our family, friends, and neighbors if we withhold the Gospel out of fear of offending them. Now is the time. Shine. Don't hide. Stand. Don't compromise. Use your voice. Don't remain silent. Act. Don't remain still. Speak the truth in love, and love those whom you speak to, even if they do not love what you have to say or love you back. Jesus warned us that this will happen. The cross should constantly remind you of how much the world hates God and how much God loves the world. At times, you will have to stand for what is right and call evil wrong, yet that does not give you an excuse to treat anyone wrongly. It is possible to disagree with someone without disrespecting them. In the end, be concerned with winning a soul more than simply winning an argument.

***The world darkest hour always coincides with  
the Church's finest hour.***

Time is running out. We are approaching the event horizon. Distinctions of every kind are being destroyed, all while information continues to be manipulated. The world is passing away and Jesus is coming back. Life is short and eternity is long. So, may we live for what lasts and not for what's next. May we not be satisfied with the fish we have in our church "tanks". No longer must we settle for fishing in another pastor's pond. Instead, may the Christ-centered Church walk on water as we navigate the deep blue seas to fish for souls from the depths of their depravity.

The body of believers is a part of an unstoppable movement with an unbelievable mission. We are more than a building or a once a week service. We are a community that is connected to the love of God which is the ultimate source of truth and inspiration. We are His

hands and feet on this Earth. We are dreamers and doers whose goal is to be a people whose lives reflect the true character and values of our God. We are tabernacle builders, connecting the reality of a loving God in Heaven to people on earth, as we champion the cause of Christ rather than live for the applause of the others. We are priests who are unashamed to exalt our Lord and give Him the honor that He is due. We reject the *Us VS Them* attitude in favor of an *Us FOR Them* approach. We are His love-filled revolutionaries.

***“Enemy-occupied territory... that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage”.***

*- C.S. Lewis*

Are you willing to answer Jesus’ invitation and follow Him into the front lines, preaching the Gospel, binding up broken hearts, giving sight to the spiritually blind, and setting captives free? (Luk4 4:18-19) It is upon us to lean on the power of the Holy Spirit to deny ourselves, carry our cross, and claim our responsibility to be watchmen on the walls and a city on a hill (Matthew 5:14).

By God’s grace, Gideon won the battle with a band of 300 versus an army so large it was impossible to count. Also, consider that Jesus primarily poured Himself into a dozen men over three years, who in turn changed the course of human history. These, and countless other examples in the past, point to the reality that God does not need large armies with great faith and great ability to do great things. He only requires a remnant with mustard seed faith and humble availability, for it is our great God who will accomplish His will in us and through us. Our good and faithful Savior is the reason any of us will be called good and faithful servants!

## ***Revolutionary: The Mark of a Godly Misfit in the Making***

So, let us look to glorify Jesus in every chance and circumstance that we have, holding fast to the “confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” (Hebrews 12:23 CSB) Repent of the sins you know about and God will handle the ones you don’t know about. (1 John 1:9) Do not be casual with the sin that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. Rather, learn to walk in the freedom that Christ has won for you.

Advance, knowing that our King not only calls us, but He goes before us. (Matthew 28:20) His angelic special forces march with us, and the devil and his demonic ranks stand no chance against us (Matthew 16:15-20, 1 John 4:4). For what can demons do to someone who has been already crucified with Christ? (Galatians 2:20)

Church, there is a war that is raging for the souls of mankind, and we are the only hope they have left. So, let us not wait any longer by living as passive observers who will eventually regret their apathy on judgment day. Instead, fight the good fight of faith, finish your race, and remain faithful (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Know that God does not expect you to do all the above on your own. He does not expect you to live *for* Him. Rather, He desires that you live with, in, by, and through Him. Revolving your life and remaining awestruck in the relentless love of Christ will make you different and will enable you to make a difference. Set Christ at the center. Stand in the Light of God’s loving promises. Speak the Gospel of Christ with boldness and serve in love with radical generosity and grace. Lastly, endure until the end. For when the dust settles, and all is made new, you and I will find ourselves joining a multitude from every ethnicity, color, size, and language, gratefully glorifying Christ for His great work, shouting “Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelations 7:9-10 CSB)

The Lord, who has conquered the world, is with you, valiant warrior. (John 16:33) So, climb out of your pit of excuses and comfort. Follow Christ. It is time to live like the kind of love-filled revolutionaries that Jesus died and rose again to see.

*I would love to connect with you and continue this journey together. You can find me on any social media network. Just search @TitoSotolongo (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, LinkedIn, TikTok, etc.)*