



## GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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Subject: Balance

### STANDING AT EXTREME CENTER

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Romans 1:16*

Dr. Vernon Grounds was a friend and mentor to thousands of young men and young women preparing for Christian work. In one of his letters he told of a woman who was captured during the Spanish Civil War, and when she was ordered to reveal where she stood politically, she knew that saying the wrong thing could result in her being shot as a traitor. To say that she was a conservative meant she was on the right of the political spectrum, and to say that she was a liberal would identify her as a leftist. Uncertain as to what she should say and knowing how important her answer could be, she thought for a moment and then replied, "I stand at extreme center."

Dr. Grounds added, "That's my own position, too, provided I'm allowed to decide where the center is located." Standing at extreme center is not always a comfortable place to be. Anyone who has ever been there, however, will acknowledge that standing at extreme center often makes you a rather vulnerable target who takes hits from both the left and the right.

But--and this is where an overview of history is important--though extremist positions are exciting and bold, they usually tend to be wrong, whether the field is political, theological, or cultural. Church history verifies the fact that the long continuum of godly men and women usually rejected the extremes and stood squarely on the statements of God's word, preferring to neither add to it nor to detract.

I have discovered that most of the issues that split churches and often turn friends against friends are not issues of theological orthodoxy but petty differences which some self-exalted Bible teacher made much more a test of right and wrong than Jesus or Paul ever did.

Confusing personalities and principles, some turn against those who stand at extreme center and label them as compromisers or suggest that they are less than orthodox, when in reality they simply refuse to wear a label, and simply follow the dictates of Scripture.

During the Bolshevik Revolution, a group of insurgents met behind closed doors, debating how they were going to take over Russia, and, according to one historian, at the very time the Bolsheviks were plotting to take a country, a large group of Orthodox clergy met in the same city debating the color of the vestments which they proposed to wear the following year.

Someone once said, "When there is mist in the pulpit, there is fog in the pew." No, Paul never said it, but I think it's something with which he would have agreed. Standing at extreme center is a difficult place to be when society or the church has moved to either the left or the right. Martin Luther discovered that. For him to stand at extreme center came at the cost of ridicule, persecution, and eventual banishment from the established Church of his day.

A final thought. How do you know whether you are at extreme center or the rest of the world is in left field? Remember the Quaker who turned to his wife and said, "All the world is strange but me and thee, and sometimes I wonder about thee." The answer may not be profound but it's important. The cross of Jesus Christ stands at extreme center, with the Old Testament to the left and the New Testament to the right. Go as far left as the book of Genesis, and as far right as the last book of Revelation, and you will always stand at extreme center and be in the company of the saints of all ages.

Resource reading: Romans 1.