



Jeff Sweeten

# Thus Saith the Lord

## CONFLICT

By Jeff Sweeten

Conflict is an ugly word to many, but it exists from the highest offices of government to the neighbors next door. In a season that attempts to spread “holiday cheer,” one hour in a retail store shopping line is all it takes to determine that we have failed miserably in the “peace on earth” department. Furthermore, it is a misguided notion to place Jesus at the head of some ecumenical pacifist movement. Christianity is inherently controversial. Jesus stated plainly, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34-36). The “on earth peace” (Luke 2:14) the angels announced at Christ’s birth was not about a “world peace” many fantasize about.

The very presence of the Son of God spawned skirmishes amongst foe and follower alike. Peter, John, James, Paul and other faithful New Testament Christians followed in their Master’s footsteps, many dying martyr’s deaths while others were persecuted mercilessly. One cannot ignore the reality of conflict or the solution as to how to deal with discord. The nature of Christian living, evangelizing and edifying, creates conflict. We must prepare our minds to address the issue from biblically.

To begin with, **Attitude** makes all the difference. The sower described four patches of ground upon which the Seed was sown (Matthew 13:3ff). The Seed, the sower, or the method of sowing was never called into question, it was the *soil*. One must be receptive to God’s Word, even when it runs counter to “what I’ve always believed.” Ignorance, rebellion, and “logo-phobia” (the fear of logic) all indicate a heart problem. Discovering you are wrong is hard; deciding to stay wrong is Hell (Hebrews 10:26).

If we bury our head in the sand, hoping troubles will fade away, we’re just fooling ourselves. In fact, it can make matters worse (Cf. 1 Corinthians 5). Becoming angry, responding in a rage, is also counterproductive (Ephesians 4:26); it’s hard to think straight when you’re full of wrath (James 1:19-20). Even worse, giving in “for the sake of peace” is perfumed cowardice at the cost of righteousness (Ephesians 4:14). **Addressing the problem** correctly is essential. Most conflict is easily resolved in its initial stages; it’s the delays that make mountains out of molehills.

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Finally, **Act in Faith**. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17) and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). Whatever course of action we choose in dealing with controversy, we must remember that our guide and compass is God’s Word. It’s not an “I’m right, you’re wrong” dispute; it is a “What did God say?” matter to be addressed. If God isn’t the final authority, then there isn’t one; and anarchy is inevitable. A return to and respect for the authority of the Bible is indispensable.

This is God’s formula for peace.

*Thus Saith the Lord*  
is presented by the

## Park Heights Church of Christ

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### Schedule of Services

#### SUNDAY

9:30 a.m. Bible Class  
10:25 a.m. Morning Worship  
1:30 p.m. Afternoon Worship

#### WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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