World War II came to an end in the spring and summer of 1945 when Germany and then Japan ended their fighting. But the Allied leadership was very specific in their demands to end the war: They told both nations that they would only accept "unconditional surrender." Both bloodied and battered nations agreed to those terms and, after many years of battle and tens of millions of people killed by the destruction, the war was thankfully, finally, over.

Now what exactly is "unconditional surrender?" It means that I, as the surrendering party, am immediately ending all resistance. This is a nonnegotiable moment in which I am holding out for no favorable terms. I am extracting no promises; I am making no deals. I am completely and totally "giving up," with no resistance left behind.

Why am I talking about this? Because God has been taking me on an interesting journey over the last several weeks, and I wanted to share with you all a little bit of that journey.

I have often talked about the need that everybody has to, at a moment in conscious time, surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. It occurred to me that the idea of "surrendering" could be thought of as a negotiation. Certainly, in military history, surrenders have often been times of negotiation, of give-and-take between combatants seeking to end a conflict but with terms that were still at least partially favorable to them. This can also mean that finally agreeing to terms of surrender can take a very long time. Many of us may remember the Paris peace talks, aimed at ending the Vietnam War. They initially began in May 1968, and didn't conclude until the Paris Peace Accord was eventually signed in January 1973.

That is not what God is seeking - a negotiated settlement of some kind between Him and us. What He is seeking is our unconditional surrender - no terms, just our "giving up."

The Bible bears this out, and we see this in verses that include the simple English word "all." Two great examples are:

1) From the OT: ***"Trust in the Lord with <u>all</u> your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in <u>all</u> your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight"- Solomon, Proverbs 3:5-6.***

2) From the NT: ***"'Love the Lord your God with <u>all</u> your heart and with <u>all</u> your soul and with <u>all</u> your mind and with <u>all</u> your strength"' - Jesus Christ, Mark 12:30 (quoting Deuteronomy 6:5).*** In other words, love God with <u>everything</u> you got!

An even clearer example comes from Paul's letter to the Philippian church, where he says this (and the NASB makes one particular point stand out): ***"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" - Paul, Philippians 2:5-7 (NASB).*** The phrase that Jesus *emptied Himself* is so rich in the Greek. The word Paul uses is *kenosis,* and it's a verb that means, "to empty." That is the example that Jesus lived for us, that Paul wants us to copy ourselves: Jesus emptied Himself of everything that was His to claim, leaving Himself only to be filled up with obedience

to His Father and His plan of salvation. By emptying, there was nothing left of Himself - His rights, His claims, even His life. Nothing.

So, what's that mean for us? Everything! What I have learned over these last weeks is that God does not simply want me to surrender. He wants to conquer me! To conquer means to overcome and take control. That is what God wants: He wants me to be conquered, and for He Himself to be the One doing the conquering. What has been fascinating to watch and to participate in has been how the Holy Spirit has been leading me to filter all my prayers into one ongoing plea: "Father in heaven, **conquer me!** Conquer me completely; leave nothing for me to hold on to. Conquer my heart, my mind. Conquer my emotions, my thoughts, my responses, my gestures - everything that is in me. Please, Father, conquer me - and don't ever stop!" At the end of the day, God wants to see only one thing: His Son sitting on my life's throne.

Jesus once said to His disciples, *"[A] part from Me you can do nothing"* - *Jesus Christ, John 15:5b.* I can't even surrender my life to Him without Him. So, I ask Him, I beg Him, to conquer me. "God, do it all. Take over everything that is me and make me Yours. Anything I am still holding onto - conquer it. Any desire, any thought, any idea that does not completely reflect you - conquer it."

One of my most urgent desires for The Evangelical Free Church Of Redwood Falls is that we be a healthy church.  While being a healthy church necessarily includes several components, the most fundamental one is the spiritual health of each individual member of this church family. And I firmly believe that starts with our being willing to be conquered, to be emptied of everything that is us, replaced totally by everything that is and reflects God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Has God conquered you? Does He own you and possess you and everything about you?
Do you find yourselves still fighting Him for some control of your life? Here's the deal: The more He has conquered, the greater the joy you will find in your life. His speaking, leading, guiding, directing of your life will be so much clearer because there is nothing to interfere with His message. That is a great place in which to be.

The other thing I have found is: The more He has conquered, the more I want to be conquered. My joy in having Him rule my life without limits is seasoned with a quiet but constant desperation, pleading with Him to conquer me more. The more I have experienced God, the less I want anything else.

A healthy church family starts with God-healthy people conquered by God through His Son Jesus Christ. Being conquered by God, being consumed by Him, is the greatest joy I have known in my walk with Him. Join me in begging God to conquer each one of us, that the only thing seen in our church family is the head of the house - God the Father!