

The Ultimate Formula

by Bill Volkman

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching” (Romans 10:8).

Right before graduating from high school, I enlisted in the aviation branch of the U.S. Navy. It was 1943, and the United States was deeply involved in World War II, both in Europe and in the Far East. The decision had been easy, as I had only two alternatives: enlist in the Service branch of my choice, or be drafted as a buck private in the Army. I chose Naval aviation.

Seven days after my eighteenth birthday I was officially inducted into the Navy. That June morning marked the beginning of over four years in the military.

My first orders took me to a little college in Newberry, South Carolina, for pre-flight schooling. After an all-night train ride from Chicago, I found myself at the Administration Building, in the first of many long lines, waiting to receive my room assignment.

Though forty-two years have gone by, and many events have faded from my memory, or been completely forgotten, one detail of my first day in Service is as clear as if it happened yesterday. Shortly after going to my room and meeting the three recruits who would be my roommates for the next year, a loudspeaker blared in the hall outside our door: *“Now hear this! Now hear this! This is the word! All trainees are to report on the double to . . .”*

I remember this detail vividly, because during the next year that same loudspeaker blared out those same words hundreds of times: *“Now hear this! Now hear this! This is the word”*—followed by the instructions we were to obey. The voice had no body that I could identify, but it was always there, always giving us “the word” about something.

In this article I want to give *you* “the word”—an ultimate word, a solution, a word that could be life-changing. In reality, “the word” is already in you: it’s in every Christian. It is the word Paul speaks of in Romans Ten, quoting from the Old Testament: *“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”* (v. 8). If you truly understand the power and significance of this word, you will be well on your way to solving all the riddles of life and the universe.

I closed my first book, *The Wink of Faith*, with Paul’s call to recognize that the living Word (Jesus Christ) dwells in our hearts if we are believers:

*“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, **that Jesus Christ is in you**—unless indeed you fail the test?”* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Have you tested yourself to see if you are in the faith? Do you recognize that Jesus Christ is indeed in you, and that He is your very life? Do you know that because of your union with Him you are a new creature and a partaker of His divine nature? Are you convinced that the kingdom of God is within you? Are you comfortable in saying that you are a *perfect expression* of the Christ with whom you are united as one? If you can answer yes to these questions, then you are ready to embrace the ultimate formula: *The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.*

Why do I call this the “ultimate formula”? Quite simple: because these few words epitomize the foundation of all human activity. What motivates us in our hearts and what we express with our mouths are the critical prerequisites for everything we do.

Every activity of life consists of three parts: a *thought*, a *word* and a *deed*—or, put another way: an *idea*, a *decision* and an *action*. Before you picked up this book, an idea came to your mind. Then with your reasoning capacity you came to a decision and said to yourself, “I’m going to read this book.” Only at that point did you actually pick it up. *Thought, word, deed.*

Paul follows the words which I label as an “ultimate formula” with an even shorter phrase meaning exactly the same thing: *the word of faith!*

“*The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart—that is, **the word of faith** which we are preaching*” (Romans 10:8).

I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that these four words summarize the heart of Paul’s message. For it is by *the word of faith* that all Christians operate their lives. I was tempted to say that *mature* Christians operate their lives by the word of faith, but that would not be accurate. *All* Christians have spoken at least one word of faith—the word of faith that spoke their conversion into being.

In a limited but very real sense, *all* our words, positive and negative, are words of faith. Whatever we embrace in our believings and acknowledge by our words becomes our reality. If our believing is positive, it’s labeled “faith”; if negative, it’s labeled “unbelief.” Although you might have tremendous talent, if you are convinced that you will fail, you undoubtedly will. Our beliefs dictate our experience. When we disbelieved in God, then for us He did not exist; we led godless and miserable lives. When we believed on Christ, nothing about Christ changed; He was always loving us. But we changed dramatically into new creatures, *because our believing changed*. Whatever words we speak from a heart conviction sooner or later give birth to life-changing results, for better or for worse.

Notice the passage that follows my “ultimate formula” verse:

“*That if you **confess with your mouth** Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, **resulting** in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, **resulting** in salvation*” (Romans 10:9,10).

Next to John 3:16, I suppose the above verses have been used in more conversion experiences than any others in Scripture. For these verses clearly state the two requirements of salvation: 1) a heart belief and 2) a confession with the mouth. We need the Word within *and* a word without. We must experience an *inner* revelation by the Spirit of Christ (the living Word), before we can make an *outer* expression, or confession, of our persuasion.

Exactly *what* word is Paul referring to when he says it is very near us, in our mouth and in our heart? Is it:

- 1) the Scriptural word and commandments (Deut. 30:11),
- 2) the *living Word*, Christ Himself, the second person of the Trinity (“*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*”—1 John 5:7),
- 3) *the inner promptings* of God via the indwelling Spirit,
- 4) the *spoken words* of man,
- 5) or it is perhaps a combination of two or more of these?

I'm sure that theologians would differ substantially in their answers to this important question, each supplying ample justification for their positions. But let's go beyond all the analysis. Don't all of these alternatives finally come down to only *one* word? The Word, dwelling in both our hearts and in our mouths, is *the Spirit of Christ with whom we are in union*. Christ the Word expresses Himself through the words we speak, for His Spirit is joined to ours. What God has revealed inwardly, we express outwardly.

Every word of faith contains these two elements: an *inner revelation* and an *outer expression*. These were the ingredients of our first word of faith when we were born again, and they are exactly the same ingredients that enable us to be whole persons and live fulfilled lives.

How does the "ultimate formula" work? Can it be such a simple matter as speaking a few words of faith? Yes'. Was there anything complicated about our conversion? Of course not. It was a simple response to a heart knowing. Granted, our search for Life may have included years of preparation that were difficult and onerous, but when the light finally went on, we simply acknowledged what we inwardly believed. We recognized ourselves as God's children, and so we acknowledged that fact.

The working out of our Christian life is meant to be just as simple, even though we might not think so during our second great search. The first forty-one years of my life as a Christian were spent in a wilderness search for meaningful answers to the perplexing questions of life. When I finally knew who I really was in Christ, and saw the total glory of my destiny as a co-heir with Him, the fulfilling life I had been striving for became much simpler. In truth, it was already there! God told me the same thing He told the children of Israel when they entered the Promised Land, after forty years of wandering in unbelief:

"For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it" (Deuteronomy 30:11,14).

Remember some of these words? They are the same ones Paul quoted in Romans 10:8. He summed them up in a new expression—*the word of faith*—but there was nothing new about the *simplicity* and *availability* of the word in our mouths and hearts. The mystery of the inner Word—Christ in us, the hope of glory—was substantially hidden until the revelation of Jesus Christ, but the truth was always simple and available for those who saw through the eyes of faith. Hebrews Eleven, the roll-call of the heroes of faith, names just a few of the Old Testament greats who believed in their hearts and confessed with their mouths.

The inner revelation leading to belief in the heart is God's part of the ultimate formula; the confession with the mouth is man's part. Our confession can take the form of *acknowledgement* or *affirmation*. *When I agree with God's perspective and God's pronouncements about myself, there is acknowledgement*—I am acknowledging Him (the Living Word) in me. *When I agree with God's perspective and God's pronouncements about others, there is affirmation*—I am affirming Christ's life or potential life in all those who make up my local world.

For years I have been very familiar with Proverbs 3:6—*"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."*

But it was only recently that I came to understand how vital and true that verse is. Do you want to see some of the "S" curves in your life straightened out? Then, make a practice of consistently acknowledging Him as being in positive action in all the varied encounters of your experience.

In a comparable way, we encourage and build up others, affirming them as to who they are in Christ rather than negatively pointing out their faults and foibles. We are to “*affirm together with the Lord*” (Eph. 3:17) that *all* the members of our family, our friends and our associates are wonderful and unique expressions of Christ (even though unsaved or misused!), and that God is at work in all their lives.

Though it sounds like an over-simplification, I maintain that the bottom-line of handling life is what I sometimes label as “*A and A*”—*acknowledgement and affirmation*. Sounds a bit like “I’m OK, you’re OK” doesn’t it? Well, I’m convinced that as we start acknowledging that we *are* OK expressions of Christ and start acting on the basis of who we are in our union, instead of solely on the basis of how we feel or appear, victory *will* replace defeat. Likewise, to the extent that we affirm that others in our local world are OK too—that they are unique, wonderful expressions of God—I’m convinced that they will be released to new levels of wholeness as persons.

So, I am not afraid to use and recommend my “ultimate formula.” In all of life I seek to consistently acknowledge the Christ in myself and to affirm the Christ in others—to declare that we are all *perfect expressions* of the Christ with whom we are in union. As loudly and clearly as I can, I purpose to say: “Now hear this! Now hear this! This is the word! The Word is very near us, in our mouths and in our hearts, so that we can *know* and *be* and *do* all we are meant to *know* and *be* and *do*.”