

## **It's Time for a Funeral**

**By Bob Young**

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20).*

You've heard the statement as have I, "There's nothing wrong with that church that a few good funerals won't solve." The reference is usually to some group of negative, controlling older folks who (in the view of the younger folks making such statements) are holding the church back. Not long ago, I used the phrase in a slightly different context and a slightly different way. "There's nothing wrong with the church that a good funeral won't fix—its own!" Some churches need to make a clean cut with the "old man" (old church) and put on the "new man" (new church). Some churches need to experience newness in Christ again, and find a fresh start.

One minister said to a frequent visitor, "There's nothing wrong with you that a good funeral won't solve. I'll even send you flowers!" He was speaking figuratively to a woman who was stressed out about her life but unwilling to hand it to God. The visitor only smiled. What she needed most was the ability to let go of the past, put it to rest for good, and start over. Although we don't often think of the parallels between baptisms and funerals, consider the possibilities. (I will be the first to admit that it is much more enjoyable to consider the parallels between baptism and new babies!)

The woman I mentioned above had the same problem most of us have—too much "self" and not enough Jesus. When we run short on the "Jesus" in our life, we also run short on the willingness to sacrifice, to serve, and to depend on him. Many of the daily problems in life can be solved by remembering the crucified life we live in Christ. Only then Jesus can take over.

The apostle Paul recognized the parallel between baptism and a funeral when he wrote, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:1-4). The symbolic burial of baptism clearly says the old person has died so that the new may come forth.

Too often in our lives, we see signs there is still life in the old man after the grave of baptism. Only when we smother our life with the presence of Christ can Christ live freely within in, unhindered by the "old" man. Send yourself some flowers today. Have a good funeral.