

# A preacher's tale

Barr chronicles his hell-and-back journey

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Of The Edge

At the age of 9, Burton Barr Jr. knew he was destined to be a preacher. He preached to all who would listen, which was most often his younger brother Ralph and his puppy Rex on their back porch in St. Louis. What Barr didn't know was that he'd have to go to hell and back in a world of drugs, violence and prison before he could truly carry out his calling.

In "The Hoodlum Preacher: I Was Lost, Now I Am Found," Rev. Barr gives the autobiography of a man who before the age of 20 was an ordained preacher, but by the age of 20 racked up an expensive drug habit. It is a story packed with the trials and tribulations of a suspense novel, and funny memories that make readers forget they're reading a true story. Burton sends a message of love and redemption in his book, but it took him a long time to figure it all out.

A product of the 1960s, Barr grew up as a black man surrounded by the turmoil of the times. Although a preacher at heart, Barr also felt the strong desire to fit in with the "cool"



The Rev. Burton Barr Jr.

group, and when his mentor in the church failed him, Barr easily fell into a life of crime.

"It seemed that I was wanted all over the eastern part of Missouri," said Barr. "There were warrants for me in St. Louis, St. Ann, Bridgeton, Maryland Heights, Richmond Heights, and several other municipalities."

Rev. Barr's long list of wrongdoings includes: stealing from employers, carrying a gun, dealing drugs, passing bad checks, being addicted to alcohol and drugs, starting a race riot, beating and cheating on his wife, stealing from his family members and the church.

"I was not a family man," Barr said. "I was a dope fiend, a con man, a liar and a thief. I used anyone that came in contact with me. Every turn that I made was the wrong turn, and every road that I took was the wrong road."

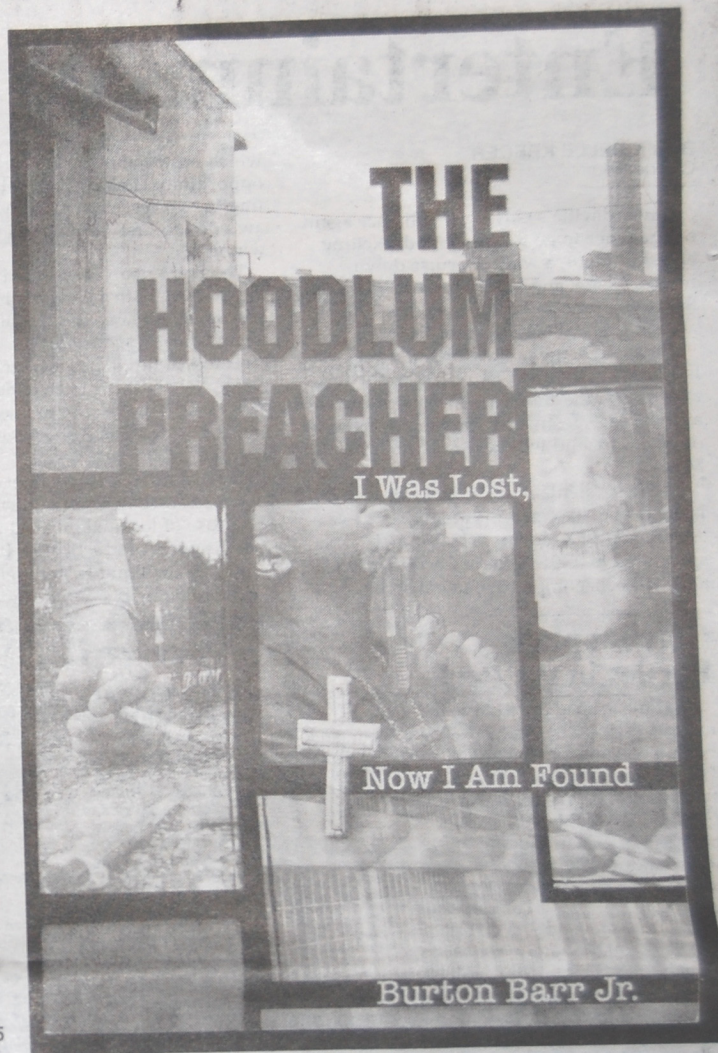
His wild behavior peaked in the mid-80s when his drug habit cost him \$500 a day.

"By the age of 20, I was shooting heroin, smoking weed, getting drunk and stealing to support myself, turning away from the church that would eventually offer me an opportunity for redemption," said Barr.

As his alcoholic-turned-preacher father did, Barr was able to turn the tide. He sobered up, stopped crime and went back to the church. Since 1994, he has been preaching to others, and putting particular focus on children who may be on the wrong path. He speaks at prisons, churches and schools, hoping to make a difference in the lives of others.

His lessons are drawn directly from his own life. He tells others that you do not have to be a product of your environment; you're not beyond redemption; it's never too late to turn your life around; and no matter what you've done or what you have become, God loves you.

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The Edge asks: