



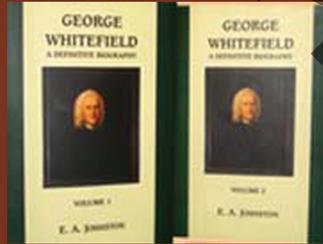
Author is preaching from the pulpit of the Old South First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, MA. The sign behind him reads: "Underneath this pulpit are deposited the remains of the Rev. George Whitefield."

E. A. Johnston, Ph.D., D.B.S. is a fellow of the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching, and an evangelist and conference speaker with Ambassadors For Christ Intl.-USA.

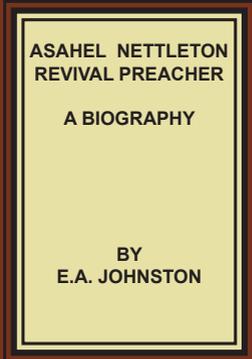
Dr. Johnston has been a student of revival for several decades and his ministry passion is toward revival in the Church and

spiritual awakening in the world.

Dr. Johnston is the author of sixteen books. Recently, Revival Literature published Dr. Johnston's *George Whitefield: A Definitive Biography* in two volumes, clothbound with dust jacket, containing 1172 pages and 48 photos. The foreword and preface were written by Dr. J.I. Packer and Richard Owen Roberts.

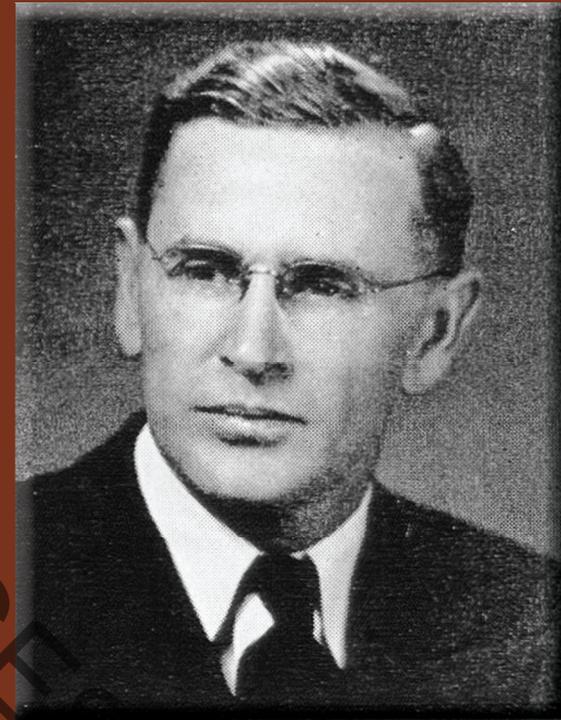


As soon as possible, Revival Literature will publish *Asahel Nettleton: Revival Preacher*; also written by Dr. Johnston. This clothbound book of around 500 pages is commended by Dr. J.I. Packer who says: "The momentous ministry of the Edwardsean evangelist Asahel Nettleton, a key figure in the Second Great Awakening, has been effectively forgotten during the past century and a half of less-than-Reformed revivalism. Dr. Johnston's masterful and thorough biography is a long-overdue tribute to this outstanding servant of God, and is priority reading for all who care about evangelism today."



GOD'S "HITCHHIKE" EVANGELIST

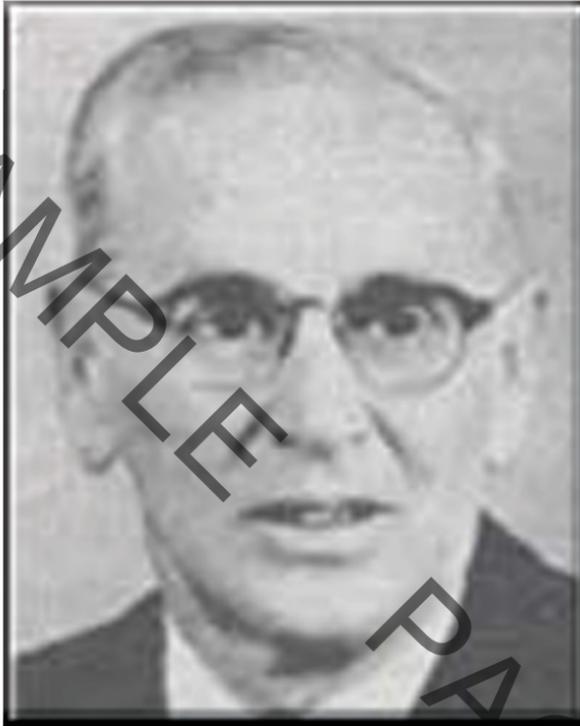
THE BIOGRAPHY OF ROLFE BARNARD



By
E. A. Johnston

GOD'S "HITCHHIKE" EVANGELIST — ROLFE BARNARD By E. A. Johnston

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SAMPLE

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Acknowledgments

I must first acknowledge the King of Glory, my Redeemer Jesus Christ who revealed Himself to me, showed me I was on my way to hell and that I deserved to go there, and who marvelously saved me by His grace and took a lost church member and gave him *life*. I want to thank my precious wife Carla and my dear daughter Carly for their willingness to accept my absence in writing. I warmly thank Dr. John Thornbury for his friendship and research help on his friend, Rolfe Barnard. I am indebted to Wylie Fulton for research material, encouragement and the title for this book! I am grateful to Drew Garner for gifting me books on Baptist history and sovereign grace. I am thankful for Bro. Howell for maintaining the Rolfe Barnard Library on SermonAudio.com. I wish to thank “The Fanal”: the Yearbook of Piedmont Bible College and Cathie Chatmon for sending me the cover photo for the book (which is the 1948 faculty photo of Rolfe Barnard when the school was the Piedmont Bible Institute and he was the part-time theology professor and school evangelist). I wish to thank Dr. Paige Patterson and Barbara Walker of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for the faculty photo. I thank E. W. Parks for the Barnard photos! I want to express gratitude for Dr. Bob Doom at Revival Literature for making this publication possible!

A word of encouragement to my preacher brethren. The germination of this project is the result of the following story: While re-reading David Wilkerson’s book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, I was impressed by a facet in Wilkerson’s life. Early in his ministry he was a country pastor who spent the hours of midnight to 2am watching television to unwind and relax. One evening God challenged Wilkerson to give that time to Him.

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Wilkerson sold his TV and never replaced it. From that point forward he gave God midnight to 2am, and it was during this time that God called Wilkerson to NYC to minister among teen gang members, eventually starting Teen Challenge. I realized that God did not reveal this wider ministry opportunity to Wilkerson until he chose to go deeper with God in a sacrificial daily quiet time. I had maintained a daily, regular quiet time for many years, but lately my time with the Lord was missing something—there was no *sacrifice* attending it. And the God of the Bible delights in sacrifice, for He sacrificed His only begotten Son for sinful man. After reading Wilkerson's story, I made a covenant with God to rise at 4:30am and give God the first hour and a half of each day—walking with Him. It is amazing how God honored that time! During this period I became familiar with a man I had never heard of—Rolf Barnard. No man told me about Barnard but God did. God called me to write this biography on Barnard and gave me great assistance in performing this almost impossible task. This book would not be in your hands had it not been for a willingness to go deeper with God. Let me ask you a question and please be honest. Does your daily quiet time with God have a sacrificial aroma attending it? Is your sweetheart love for Christ more passionate today than yesterday? His desire is to *spend time with you*. God is looking for a man *to walk with*. Those Enochs will be translated to a deeper walk and wider usefulness to Him for His glory.

Foreword

It is with great joy and God-given enthusiasm that I write this foreword.

I have personally profited from hearing the sermon tapes and CDs of Rolfe Barnard and reading his printed sermons which we've had the privilege to distribute.

The founder of Revival Literature, the late Dr. James A. Stewart, knew and appreciated Brother Barnard when he had the opportunity to preach either in meetings or where Brother Barnard was pastoring. When James Stewart founded Revival Literature part of his vision was to produce biographies of men used in revival, such as Malof, Burns, McCheyne, Spurgeon, and Troup. I know he would be excited to have *God's "Hitchhike" Evangelist* in our series of such biographies.

As source material is scarce, with no journals or personal information from living family members, Dr. Johnston has done a masterful job of telling the life of Rolfe Barnard from his sermons.

I'm praying that this biography will set this generation of preachers afire to preach afresh all the Word of God with both its warnings and woings. I'm praying the "Lord of the harvest" to raise up in our beloved Republic from coast to coast and border to border a band of fearless, Spirit-filled preachers like Rolfe Barnard.

Barnard, like Richard Baxter of old, would rejoice to have men to "... preach as never sure to preach again and [preach] as a dying man to dying men."

Yours for Revival,
Bob Doom

SAMPLE

PAGES

Introduction

Rolfe Barnard was an evangelist who lived in relative obscurity and died without even a public notice of his death, but of whom it was said that he was the human means of divine mercy to a 100,000 souls, the fruit of an itinerant preaching ministry that lasted over forty years and canvassed much of America.

To say this man Barnard was a controversial figure is an understatement. A Southern Baptist and fundamentalist, Barnard's ministry alienated him within his own denomination and fundamentalist circles. Pulpits were closed to him and peers spoke ill of him. What did he preach which drew such ire from so many? Rolfe Barnard preached the unvarnished doctrines of grace, the gospel of God's glory. He believed in sovereign grace and defended its doctrines to his death. He saw its reality within his own heart and proclaimed the sovereignty of God in the salvation of men—this was the message which upset so many. This was also the message that God seemed pleased to *save many* throughout the ministry of Rolfe Barnard. His primary message was repentance in a day when most preachers no longer believed repentance was necessary to faith and salvation. Even within the sovereign grace movement, which he was primarily instrumental in its formation and served as its figurehead, he came down hard on those who only preached the doctrine of election and did not preach repentance and the need for a changed life. Addressing a group of Reformed pastors during this period he commented, "We must put first things first. The first emphasis is repentance. This generation doesn't need to learn the doctrine of election. This generation needs to be called to repentance. This generation needs to bow to Jesus Christ!" But what alienated him most within his denomination was his prophetic voice which cried out against the spiritual deterioration of Southern

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Baptist life, the dilution of the gospel to make it more palatable to the masses, and evangelism which relied more upon man's methodology and emotional appeals more than God's sovereignty and the Holy Spirit's activity in convicting the heart of sin. Rolfe Barnard was not afraid to take aim and shoot down what he saw as the cheapening of grace and the perversion of the gospel, and he simply ruffled some feathers of his peers! Thus he had his enemies. One man was so mad at him that purportedly he came to a meeting with a gun to shoot Barnard! Providentially there was no shooting.

Historian Leon McBeth referred to Rolfe Barnard as "the pioneer of Calvinist resurgence among Baptists in America." It was said of Barnard that he was one of the first proponents of getting Banner of Truth's Puritan books known in the United States before many began to support them. Yet, when I asked my friend Iain Murray what he knew of Rolfe Barnard he replied, "I heard of him but nothing more." I asked another Calvinist friend, Richard Owen Roberts, who has canvassed much of America in his own itinerant ministry, what he knew of Barnard and his reply was, "I have heard the name but know nothing else about him." Why has Barnard suffered from such neglect? To those in the sovereign grace movement of the 1950's Rolfe Barnard was simply a *giant*. He mentored many young preachers and he had a wide radio ministry for years, yet few today know of him. In his own day we have the following story: a local radio personality had heard Barnard as a boy, but over the years—despite much traveling—had never met anyone who had ever heard of this preacher. To the world Rolfe Barnard was a "nobody." He never made a name for himself, he formed no institution bearing his name, and he authored no books. However, he has over 270 sermons on SermonAudio.com and over 180 sermons on SermonIndex.com. These are his main legacy. Some friends published three volumes of his sermons in the 1980's, and these sixty-eight printed sermons are representative of Brother Barnard's ministry. The Rolfe Barnard Library on SermonAudio.com maintains much of the Barnard legacy.

When I began to study the life and ministry of Rolfe Barnard, I was shocked at how *greatly* this man was used of God in the salvation

of souls. In many ways he was the Asahel Nettleton of his day. In fact, Barnard and Nettleton shared much in common. Both fought for orthodox religion of their day and faced fierce opposition for their stance; both preached man's duty for immediate repentance; both saw great movements of God's grace (Nettleton witnessed more because he labored during the Second Great Awakening); and both men were private persons and walked alone. Oddly, although Rolfe Barnard was much loved by the sovereign gracers, some could be at odds with him because he gave a "public invitation" and had a tendency towards too much "preacher and means" when his peers believed all power to regenerate sinners was in the sovereign Spirit of God who operates "as He wills." Some said he was too much like Charles Finney in the methods he at times employed. He was a maverick, a prophet, and a trail blazer.

Listening to a Rolfe Barnard sermon is an *experience* in itself! You will find yourself startled, alarmed, amused, convicted, and occasionally brought to tears. Take time to read his sixty-eight printed sermons, and you will stand amazed at this man's comprehension of human nature and his understanding of the lost sinner and infidel, and admire his great ability as an effective communicator of the great doctrines of the Bible. Barnard knew full well the windings of the sinner's wicked heart, for he was once an infidel himself and knew all the excuses and objections a rebel makes so not to "stack arms" and "throw down his shotgun" at the feet of a Sovereign! Evangelist Barnard possessed a deep desire to see men submit to the claims of Christ in His lordship through repentance and a life of faith. He was a man of prayer who regularly interceded for the lost. But most of all he believed a Christian was someone who had experienced *change* through a new birth from above and had entered into a union with Jesus Christ. He firmly believed that Jesus saves sinners *from* their sins at conversion. He did not hold to the theory that someone could take Jesus as Savior now and at a later time take Him as Lord. It grieved him to see so many church members living in antinomianism. He believed in being a "doer of the Word," often ringing doorbells in the dead of winter to personally invite the lost to a meeting he was holding in

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their town. He was a man's man but not afraid to weep real tears over the lost church member seated on the front row of the church. Those who were fortunate enough to become converts under his preaching are among his most loyal supporters today.

How can one describe his preaching and still do him justice? I don't know if it can be done but I will try. Rolfe Barnard preached with a Bible in one hand and a stick of dynamite in the other! As the demands of the holy law of God were pressed upon his hearers a combustion began to occur! And as the passion of the preacher rose, sparks would begin to fly as listeners sat spellbound as they drew closer and closer to Sinai "on a smoke" until they could *sense* the terror of the Lord and were confronted with the wickedness of their own heart. At times, this spiritual combustion could be too overwhelming to some of his hearers, and they would have to be removed from a Rolfe Barnard meeting on a stretcher! This occurred on more than one occasion. Do you know anyone whose preaching does that? There were times when some of his hearers were so overcome by the truths they heard they became insensible and landed in mental institutions. In his younger years his preaching could literally shake an entire town! His preaching could be powerful and gripping under the right circumstances, and that was Rolfe Barnard at his best and most effective. He could also be quite ordinary as a preacher, but he kept a lifelong willingness to preach what others would not and face the consequences for his convictions. He was a man jealous for God and His glory! But one thing was certain, if you went to a Rolfe Barnard meeting you did not leave without a strong opinion of the preacher good or bad! His preaching disturbed people. If I could sum up his preaching with one word it would be "disturbing." He was a disturbing preacher. He had a way of getting under your skin like a splinter beneath your finger which gnaws at you and makes you wince. He could get you mad. Get you under conviction. Get you to the foot of Calvary and at the feet of the Savior whose fountain of blood can wash all sins away!

He preached the gospel in its purity and proper order. He believed in total depravity and preached often on the doctrines of

ruin, redemption, repentance, and regeneration with the voice of a prophet warning of a judgment to come and a Christ who ruled with all authority from a heavenly throne! His was not a politically correct gospel. His gospel had *power* to save! Little is known of his early childhood. His daughter Joanne recently died before I could contact her for information on her father. What is known about his early life can only be culled from his sermons. He left no autobiography or diary. With the exception of some personal recollections of friends, the information on Rolfe Barnard herein presented is drawn from his sermonic material. Therefore, we will let the man speak for himself throughout this biography. Rolfe will tell us about himself, what he believed, what he preached, and what God accomplished through his itinerant and radio ministry. You will enjoy his Southern colloquialisms and his humble transparency as a poor sinner saved by grace.

Evangelist Barnard had his share of peculiar traits and flaws (like the time he turned his Baptist church in North Carolina into a “experiment,” which ended in chaos and disaster and his sudden departure!); he demonstrated on more than one occasion that he had “feet of clay.” He was an imperfect man who preached a perfect Christ.

As you read this biography on Rolfe Barnard we hope that the ride will be rewarding, although often bumpy; such was the man known as “The Hitchhike Evangelist.”

E. A. Johnston, Ph.D., D. B. S.
Evangelist and author
Memphis, TN

SAMPLE

PAGES

Chapter One

Early Years

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. — Psalm 71:17

Gunterville, Alabama is a fishing and hunting paradise. Situated near beautiful Lake Gunterville and Gunterville State Park the rural charm of the town that Rolfe Barnard called his boyhood home still abounds in fishing holes and farmland, and it is the heart of rural southern America.

Rolfe Pickens Barnard was born August 4, 1904; he was the third of seven children—three boys and four girls. It was a new century and a time before the sinking of the Titanic, before the First World War, before automobiles and modern technology. It was also a time when life in America, particularly in the South, was still lived at a slow pace where a boy could grow up roaming country lanes and taking time to enjoy God’s creation in the outdoors with his hunting dog beside him and the wind at his back. It was also a time in America when there was still a fear of God in the land. It was a time when God still moved in revival—the 1904 Welsh revival brought 100,000 souls to Christ within a year! Rolfe’s parents were similar to many other Christian families at the turn of the century who maintained a family altar in the home and raised their children on the Bible.

James and Julia Barnard had a good Christian reputation in Guntersville. James Barnard was the school superintendent and well known in the farming community as a solid Christian man.

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When Rolfe became a preacher he often spoke fondly of his father and in a sermon commented, that when his father died and lay in his coffin there was a heavenly glow on his countenance. Later in life Rolfe Barnard passed through the town of Guntersville, but the town had become unrecognizable to him; concrete streets replaced dirt roads and he could not find his way around town. Passing a farm he stopped for directions, parking his car by a fence line while he waited for a farmer to bring his mule team up near where he was parked. As the farmer approached, Rolfe introduced himself. The farmer wiped his brow with a handkerchief and repeated, "Barnard ... Barnard. You wouldn't be related to Jim Barnard, would you?" asked the farmer. "Yes, he was my daddy." The farmer extended his hand, "Well, if you are Jim Barnard's boy you must be *all right*." The Barnard name was still good in that community years later. Little Rolfe grew up in a solid Christian home, and he regularly attended the local Baptist church where his family belonged. One childhood incident clearly stuck out in his mind from this time; he mentions it in his sermon, "How God Saved Me from Infidelity":

When I was eleven years old, I walked down the aisle of a church one time. A missionary was there and he said, "Are there any here that will make a vow tonight to God?" He quoted that song, "I'll go where You want me to go, I'll be what You want me to be, I'll say what You want me to say." I thought I was saved, but I wasn't. Before I knew it, I was down that aisle and I said, "I will." You may not believe this, but if you give God anything, He never trades back, He keeps it. I had made a vow.

As a boy Rolfe enjoyed reading the stories of Horatio Alger, where a shoe shine boy can grow up and marry the owner's daughter and become president of the company! Little Rolfe fantasized that he too could become a big success, and he expected "big things" for himself in life. Having an academic for a father he excelled in his studies and demonstrated maturity for his age by entering school at age four! The Barnard family relocated to Abilene, Texas when Rolfe was a teenager. Rolfe soon enrolled at Hardin Simmons University to begin his college studies at the tender age of fifteen! Rolfe planned on becoming a successful trial lawyer and he applied

himself for a legal career.

Upon graduation, his academic excellence won him a scholarship to law school at Baylor and the offer of a junior partnership in a prestigious Texas law firm! He was on his way to making a name for himself as an attorney and achieving his own version of his boyhood Horatio Alger dreams! But God had other plans for Rolfe Pickens Barnard and being a famous lawyer wasn't one of them.

Unbeknownst to Rolfe his parents had dedicated him, before his birth, to be a *preacher*. When Jim and Julia saw the direction their son was taking by choosing a legal career and not ministry, they grew concerned and shared their prayer with him of dedicating him to the Lord and ministry. This news was not warmly received by Rolfe—he had other plans and being a preacher wasn't one of them! A battle commenced between Rolfe Barnard and his God. Rolfe would fight being a preacher for the next five years, and these five years would be a heartbreak for his parents as they saw their son become a declared atheist and infidel! But Jim and Julia never gave up hope for their rebellious son because they had already given him to God before he was born. No matter how hard Rolfe Barnard would fight against God for the next five years he would eventually realize that one cannot outrun God.

SAMPLE

PAGES

Chapter Two

Infidel

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. — Psalm 14:1

Rolfe Barnard commented later in life that Psalm 14:1 was a mistranslation in the King James. The text really read, “The fool hath said in his heart, no God.” Barnard commented, “There is no such thing as a true atheist. Everybody deep down believes there is a God; they just don’t want any part of Him! I believed in God when I was an infidel but I didn’t want Him to run my life!”

Rolfe’s college days were crowned with many achievements: an honor roll student, he was tall and handsome and well liked by many. He played lead roles in the school drama productions and he was tough to beat on the debate team which was good preparation for him becoming a trial lawyer. But out of all these achievements he was mostly known around campus for being a proclaimed atheist! What aggravated his college professors most was the fact that he was such a star pupil and campus leader and the school was a Baptist college! But what greatly disturbed the college faculty was that the campus star was leading many astray into atheism. In a later sermon he lamented over this fact that he had “led so many to hell in those days!”

Rolfe was striving against God because he did not want to become a preacher. He did not want to live a life of cornbread and water as a preacher when he had such bright prospects before him at one of the country’s most prestigious law firms. He wanted to

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make a name for himself and grow a big bank account and being a preacher did not fit into his plans so he fought against God. He formed an infidel club and became its president, holding Friday night rallies on campus and swaying many away from Christ. He convinced himself that there was “no God for him” and he fought God tooth and nail for five years! He was gifted as an orator and debater and he could influence many fellow college kids to come over to his side of infidelity. Soon over three hundred students belonged to Rolfe’s infidel club! He would stand on a platform and denounce God and dare Him to do anything about it! He spoke about these days later in life in a sermon entitled, “How God Saved Me from Infidelity”:

I knew that being saved for me meant I would have to be a public preacher. And I did two things to try to handle that situation: I became an infidel by day and a prayer by night. By day I got so bitter, I got so miserable that I had to find a refuge, I had to crawl into the dust just to get a little peace. So I found out there wasn't any God, I said. I organized an infidel club in my college; I had three hundred young Baptist college students to join. By night I would pray to God to save me. I was an orator in those days, college debater, college Shakespearean actor. I was a big shot in those days. I was the most prominent man on the campus when I organized my infidel club. I led a lot of people to hell.

One can only imagine the rumors in the Baptist church where Rolfe’s parent’s were members, that their son was the town atheist! The battle going on inside Rolfe Barnard was a paradox for by day he was an outspoken atheist and the leader of an infidel band; but at night, when alone, he was a penitent sinner on his knees begging God not to destroy him. He would curse God by day and pray to Him by night! A man cannot fight God and win and Rolfe knew this deep down in his heart and he became fearful for his life by blaspheming God during the day. He would pray, “God, if You’ll not kill me tonight I’ll surrender to You tomorrow,” but his promises to God were quickly broken in the morning light. He had simply “dug in his heels” against God’s plan for his life. Insights from this rebellious period in his life are seen by his comments

from his sermon, “How God Saved Me from Infidelity”:

I have you to understand that I had a scholarship in the best law school in the world. I have you to understand that I had the offer already of a junior partnership in the biggest law firm in Texas when I was out of school. You wouldn't catch me preaching, being a little old hitchhike preacher living on cornbread and water and everybody cursing me and talking about me! Now there was never a day in my life that I didn't want to keep out of hell, but I wasn't going to preach. I was cursing God by day and begging God to save me by night but I ain't going to preach! For five years I tried to get God to save me and every time I said, “I will not preach!” I don't care how little it is, if that is where your rebellion heads up, it must be crushed. If not there is no salvation. I know what it is to pray and cry, seek and everything else. This easy believe stuff to get somebody to cry a little bit and make some kind of profession and call it salvation is deception. You must be willing to *surrender your all* to the Lord Jesus Christ and do His will. Christ must be revealed to you—that is salvation.

When Rolfe Barnard pitted his will against a holy God he hid a secret from his other infidel friends. The smile they saw on his face by day did not reveal the turmoil he was experiencing on the inside. During those college days Rolfe Barnard was the most popular man on campus and he was the most unhappy. He was a man eaten up inside with guilt and frustration. He faced a fork in the road of his life: one way led to success and popularity as top lawyer; the other led to poverty and unpopularity as a preacher. He knew which road God wanted him on but at this time he was unwilling to take it.

Rolfe had a friend on campus who was praying for his salvation. This friend was his English professor. He often referred to this professor later in life as “the one who loved my soul enough to not let me go to hell.” We see his remarks from his sermon, “A Burden for Souls”:

I stand here tonight because God set his affections on me and He sent a college professor after me and that college professor wouldn't let me go to hell. He loved me and he wouldn't leave me alone. Somebody wouldn't let me go to hell; that college professor he prayed for me, and wept over me. I don't know why God laid me on that old professor's

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heart—I just thank God He did. That professor couldn't save me, but he could weep over me and ask God to save me. He couldn't break me, but he could ask God to break my stubborn will. He would wait for me at night and with tears in his eyes he would say, "Rolfe, I can't let you go to hell."

SAMPLE

PAGES

Chapter Three

God's Bloodhound

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. — Matthew 16:25

Many prayers were offered up to God on behalf of Rolfe Barnard during this critical time in his life. The tears that his English professor shed for his soul haunted Rolfe—he just couldn't believe a man would hound him like that! Everywhere he went on campus Rolfe would see the professor's pained face as Rolfe the infidel would deny God. Memories began to haunt him: his parents' dedication of him to the Lord; the time when he was a eleven-year-old boy when he made a public profession in church to follow God.

We see his remarks about these things in "How God Saved Me from Infidelity":

You may not believe this but if you give God anything, He never trades back, He keeps it. I had made a vow. I didn't know that back of my actions that night, my mother and father never told me (they both are in glory now), but before I was born they gave me to God to be a public preacher. They never did tell me. God knew about it. I'm telling you, if you give one of your children to God, He will take it! Our papas and mommas knew about this in other days. They just said, "Lord, he is Yours." That is serious business. A boy can't win against odds like that; it just can't be done. He has got Mama and Papa and God against him! You had better quit before you start!

Still, oddly, Rolfe Barnard continued to fight against God and

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refuse to surrender to His claims on his life. He wanted God *on his terms*. He wanted to be saved but he did not want to preach. He wanted to pursue his lifelong dream of becoming a success in life, and he felt the legal profession was the best platform for him to exercise his many talents. He knew there was a surrender involved to come to Christ, and he still refused to “throw down his shotgun” which was pointed at God. This is seen from the same sermon:

I knew for five long years that salvation for me meant I had to be a public preacher. And I believe it is meant for you to do whatever the will of God is for you. For me it was this: I knew that surrender to King Jesus meant I would have to be a preacher and that was the one thing I was not going to do! So I did what it seems that most professing Christians have been able to do (I couldn't get the job done though!). I tried to get God to save me without throwing down my rebellion, but that just won't work. You just can't do it and call yourself a Christian. If you do, you're certain to go to hell. Until your rebellion is crushed and you surrender to do His will, there is no salvation.

What Rolfe Barnard failed to realize was that he was being chased. The young rebel was being pursued by an agent from the King's army. God's Bloodhound was hot on his trail! And it would not be long until the Holy Spirit got a hold of him and saved him, causing Rolfe Barnard to “throw down his arms” and surrender to the King of Kings who had all claims on his life.

A circumstance occurred in his life at this juncture which was out of pattern from his original plans to go immediately to law school after graduating college. We see a divine delay in his plans. Instead, he took a teaching job in a Panhandle Texas town to pay down his debts before going to law school, and it was there that God's Bloodhound would track the rebel down! It all started when he joined the local Baptist church. We see the somewhat humorous account from an extract from the same sermon:

I graduated from that school and I went out to the Panhandle of Texas to teach school. I was going to work a year before I went on to law school and pay a few of my debts. I got out there, and of course, I was a good Baptist all that time—I passed for a good church member, so they didn't

turn me out. Anybody that wants to can be a church member now; it is the easiest thing on earth to get in and just about impossible to get out. That's the church now. Well, I was a church member and also president of an infidel club in that school. But I went out to teach school and in those days you had to be a church member if you got a job teaching in the public schools. So the first Sunday, I marched down the aisle and joined the church there by letter. Of course I didn't go back that Sunday night, no use being a fool about this religion business! And I didn't go Wednesday night, when they had a business meeting and elected me to be a teacher of the men's Bible class. That's right! And there I was. I supposed they didn't know anything about me and I could put on a good show you know, and I knew more Bible when I was a kid than those men did, and so we just had a storm! If I didn't go through hell, I'll choose up and take sides. I taught that Bible class and then the preacher resigned and we went two or three Sundays with no preaching. Then one Sunday I went to my boardinghouse from Sunday school and I never did know why but I went to my room and locked it. I could have gotten out, but I didn't want anybody to come in and bother me. I threw my Bible down on the floor and I buried my face in it and said, "Lord, whether You save me or damn me, I will preach from now on!"

The guilt of the vacant pulpit had been too much for him. In his heart of hearts he knew what he had to do and that was to surrender to God and end his rebellion. He was tired of being a "hypocrite and a devil" rolled in one! When he locked himself in his room to have it out with God the battle was fought and God won.

That same afternoon he wanted to share what had happened to him with the superintendent of his church's Sunday school. He walked to the man's home and found him on the front porch asleep in a rocking chair while he awaited dinner. Rolfe walked up to him and awakened him.

"Brother Mills, I've come to tell you the Lord has saved me and I want to preach next Sunday." The superintendent said, "Well, it's about time." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Things have been going on." A couple of letters came to Panhandle, Texas post office. One of them was addressed to the Superintendent of the Sunday School of the First Baptist

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Church. The other was addressed to the Pastor—didn't know any names. They were identical letters. Some old white-haired woman from Abilene, Texas said, "My boy's coming to your town to teach school. He's called to be a preacher. He's not even saved. He's in an awful mess. Don't let him have a moment's peace." And he said, "Boy, we've been doing it. We knew you weren't saved, but we elected you to teach a men's Bible class. We've been meeting once a week and asking, 'Lord, make the fire a little hotter.' We've been waiting."

God's Bloodhound had finally caught up with Rolfe Barnard. The rebellion was ended. He had "stacked arms" and laid down his shotgun of rebellion and said "yes" to being a preacher! God had crossed him at his point of rebellion and Rolfe submitted and was saved by grace. His days as an infidel were ended.

When word reached his Alma Mater that Rolfe Barnard had finally come to Christ, it sent shock waves throughout the campus! The president of the college quickly telephoned Rolfe to see if what he had heard was true—was Rolfe Barnard the outspoken infidel really saved? When he learned it was indeed true he invited Rolfe to come and preach in their chapel for a week of meetings to tell the entire campus what had transpired in his life. We will let Rolfe Barnard tell the story in his own words from this point (taken from his sermon, "The Character of Hell"):

When I got saved I mailed two letters, one to my mother and one to the head of the English department at my old college who was the human instrument of keeping this infidel out of hell. And the head of the department of English told the president and within an hour the superintendent of the school where I was teaching got a telephone call from the president of the school where I'd been and had been the president of an infidel's club there in that Baptist school. And pretty soon I was called into the office of the superintendent and he said, "The president of your Alma Mater has been on the phone and he's asked that I grant you a week's leave. They'll take care of your expenses and your salary. He wants me to release you to come back to school and speak in chapel every night." And about that time the telephone rang again and it was the president and he asked for me. And after the "hello's" he said, "Rolfe, news has come our way that the Lord has saved you!"

I said, "I believe He has Prixy." We called him Prixy, a term of endearment. He said, "Well, I've asked your superintendent and he said it's all right with him for you to leave and I want your word and I demand that you come next week and speak to us. We'll turn the chapel over to you and we'll meet every night! I want you to come talk to us. I want you to undo much of the hell that you caused here as much as you can!"

That's a pretty hard job to do isn't it? And I went back. They still had an infidel's club. The young man who had been the vice president of it the year before when I started it, he was now the president. He and I were almost blood brothers. He heard me speak in chapel—he had to. He heard me every night. I stood up there in that chapel every night and gave what we call our testimonies, what I believed the Lord had done for me. I didn't know doctrine or nothing but they listened. And I was facing not all of the youngsters who had been in my infidel club, some of them the year before had been seniors and they'd gone on to spread their poison out yonder. But there was still a lot of them and that year the infidel club was bigger than the year I was there! And I stood up there and tried to wash stripes. That's in the Bible, isn't it? And when the last service was over my buddy, now president of the club, asked me, "Rolfe I want the privilege of taking you to the train." And we left early and went down to the train station and got the ticket arranged and sat in his car. And he said, "Rolfe, you've gone off your rocker. You used to be a brain. I hope you'll recover and come back to your senses and get rid of all this stuff!" I pled with him all that week. Monday through Friday I preached to him. I witnessed to him. And I got nowhere. And we shook hands and I got on the train. And five months later a man put five bullets in his chest. And I have terrible reason to believe that five seconds later in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments. Two young men organized an infidel's club. That was thirty-nine years ago since I shook hands and told that boy "goodbye." I'm here speaking to you, I'm afraid he's been in torments these thirty-nine years. What's the difference? Somewhere in there in the good providence of God I began to spend time in a cold room crying to the Lord for mercy and that boy never did. And he fell and he is still in the same condition he was in when he fell and I believe God changed me.

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Rolfe Barnard always maintained a sore spot in his life that haunted him the rest of his days. It bothered him that he had been the means of damning so many young people from his time in the infidel club. He often spoke about this and how he would have to stand at the last judgment and see all those young people that he sent to hell! He was always striving to undo the damage he had done and this haunted him all his life.

After his visit to his Alma Mater he took ordination at the Baptist church in which he was a member. He was preparing himself for the ministry. We have an account of this from his sermon, "The Record of God's Written, Permanent Revelation to Mankind":

I shall never forget when I was ordained. I remember my dear friend who's been in glory now many years preached the ordination sermon. I was just a young fellow and of course knew "everything," therefore knew nothing! I was full of vim, vigor and vitality, and I thought that if they would just turn me loose on this old world about a year, I would have the whole outfit converted. And there I was, I remember that preacher standing up there and among the things he said were, "Son, you don't know what you are getting into. You are yet able to believe, but there will be nights when you walk the floor. Your wife can't comfort you, your loved ones can't comfort you. The heavens will be dark and you will want to die. You will never know what heartaches you are letting yourself in for. You don't realize the opposition of Satan or the absolute depravity of men, even good men. I want to remind you of one thing: Rolfe, always be as narrow as the Bible, don't be any broader than the Bible, and preach the Word!"

Chapter Four

“Booger Town”

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. — Ecclesiastes 8:11

“Booger Town” was the infamous nickname given to Borger, Texas in the 1920’s, for it was at that time the world’s biggest oil town and the discovery of “black gold” transformed a sleepy ranch into a booming frontier town of 50,000 inhabitants within months. Prospectors and oilmen flooded the area in hopes of quick riches. The new town attracted attention quickly as word got out that money was easy to get and flowing as fast as the oil could come out of the ground! A shrewd businessman by the name of “Ace” Borger bought up most of the 240 acre ranch and created a town site consisting of saloons, grocery stores, brothels, and gaming houses. The town of Borger quickly earned the name “Booger Town” because it attracted the lowest classes of bandits, cardsharks, and prostitutes that could squeeze into the two and a half mile main street which consisted of 264 businesses!

When one studies the history of Borger, Texas it is interesting to learn that in this wild west oil town there was a shooting or knifing every day! The local deputy sheriffs were bought and paid for by “Ace” Borger who had his fingers in every pie in town. Lawlessness was rampant. Death was in the air, literally, as many died from “gas pneumonia” from the drilling fields. But what is most interesting of the secular history of this infamous town is the fact that a prominent citizen is *never mentioned*. In fact, this

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prominent person was known by everyone in Borger, Texas during 1927-1929. This well known citizen was pals with Frank Hamer, the famous Texas Ranger who shot and killed the outlaws Bonnie and Clyde. Frank Hamer was assigned to be the personal bodyguard to this prominent citizen of Borger who was instrumental in cleaning up the town of its crime! Who is this forgotten hero of this western town? None other than Rolfe Barnard!

Surprised? Rolfe Barnard was sent by the governor of Texas to clean up the town! In 1927 Governor Dan Moody sent a force of Texas Rangers to rein in the town and leading the pack was a twenty-three-year-old Rolfe Barnard! The Red Light district of the town had become so dangerous a killing occurred every day. Rolfe Barnard took signed documents to Governor Moody to bring justice to "Booger Town" and clean it up. Martial law was imposed on the town for a whole month. Two prominent citizens of Borger, the mayor and Rolfe Barnard, led a procession of 1,200 prostitutes out of the city limits! But try as you may you will not find Rolfe Barnard's name in the history of Borger, Texas and this is a shame. For sixteen volatile months he was the pastor of 50,000 people! He started the first church in town. He preached on street corners, in saloons, in houses of ill repute and went to the sinners where they were and preached the gospel to them. While preaching in the town's biggest saloon he stood on a beer keg and his picture was taken and sent to all the newspapers in adjoining states. But no one knows about Rolfe Barnard in Borger, Texas *until now*. Listen to him tell the story from his sermon, "Watching Men Die".

In 1926, the city of Borger, Texas was at that time the world's largest oil town. An old man by the name of Whitenburg, an old bankrupt rancher, struck oil on his ranch and in one year's time the royalties that he received amounted to 90 million dollars. And somebody came along and bought a town site [Ace Borger] and he made a little town and they named it Borger and in six months time there were 50,000 inhabitants of that fast growing city!

The Baptist Association of that section went out and bought one of the lots in the town for the future erection of a church building. And I'd just been saved, and they asked me

if I would go out and build a church in that wicked oil town. And I did. And I just knew one man in that wicked city and I just had five dollars in my pocket. I resigned my job—I was teaching school—and I went out to build a church. There was a lot that was paid for and I had to raise money to build some sort of building. First thing I did I purchased a dance hall that was vacant and I purchased it on credit, then I hired a man to move it and place it on the lot that had been purchased by the Baptist Association. And then not knowing what else to do, I got a big ten gallon hat and I started begging for money. The main street, the whole town was built on one main street, some businesses had false fronts and the rest of it was wood—they were hastily built and the main street was two and a half miles long. And I went down the street on one side and I knew that God was no respecter of persons so I went into every place of business; places of ill repute, saloons, gambling houses, grocery stores, just name it and I didn't leave anybody out. And I'd tell them I was a Baptist preacher and I was raising money to build a Baptist church and I wanted them to kick in and they did!

Money was loose and free! I needed about a thousand dollars to build that church. By the time I got the length of one side of the street I had thirty thousand dollars in my hat and I was doing good! And I got down on the other side of the street and one little white-haired, pink-cheeked Baptist deacon, I didn't know him but he heard there was a preacher in town and disgracing God! And he finally ran me down and he rebuked me. And I received his rebuke and he said I was doing wrong and I should be ashamed of myself and he'd forgive me because I was so young. He said, "You ought to know that the Lord doesn't want to use the devil's money to prosecute His work!" I said, "He don't?" And he said, "No siree!" And I apologized to the old man and I wouldn't rebuke an elder, except he was wrong. There's a lot of pious pomposity that we don't want any money except the Lord's money; well, I didn't know there was any other kind! The Bible says the cattle on a thousand hills are mine. The Bible says the silver and the gold are mine! The Bible says it's God that gives you power to get wealth! If the devil swipes some of God's money, well, I'll swipe some of it back!

And I remember by the time I came to the middle of the

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second block where Mr. A. P. Borger for whom the town was named—he bought the town site. He had his finger in every puddle in the city. No prostitute engaged in her traffic without paying him. No saloon sold any whiskey in town without paying him! Nobody had a gaming establishment without paying him. He had a take off of everything; the deputy sheriffs and everybody else was on his pay and he was getting rich. And I wasn't going to *pass him by* and when I got to his place, he had the biggest establishment, and there were 267 of them alike on that main street, and the front of his place was a whiskey place where you could buy whiskey, Texas was dry but they hadn't found that out there, and you could buy whiskey there and the second room was a gaming house and right behind it was a house of ill fame. 267 of such establishments in that city at that time!

And when I got there they were waiting for me! And I went in and there was a big crowd. They had been timing my approach up the street and they were waiting for me. And I told them who I was and why I was there. And they had appointed somebody to tell me that, "We are not going to give you a dime until we get a sample of your preaching!" And that just suited me fine and somebody rolled out a big beer keg and stood me up on top of it and had me hold my Bible kind of pious like, and they had a couple of deputy sheriffs with their ten gallon hats and six shooters and they looked like Hop Along Cassidy, and they took pictures of me and those sheriffs and published them in newspapers all over the west! Showing the preacher with his Bible and the sheriffs with their guns and how they were going to tame that wicked city!

And after they had their fun they said, "Preach to us!" And I preached. And I preached from the text from Ecclesiastes chapter 12 about how, "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*" And I told them that all of them there would die and they needed to repent of their sins. And I have never seen the Holy Spirit challenged where He didn't come around! He doesn't come around much today but He bothered them *that day* and seven men hit the floor of that saloon and claimed the Lord Jesus Christ. They became charter members of our church that we started! They were our first seven deacons! And from that experience of preaching to those people in that saloon we

built a church.

For sixteen months, I was a single man of twenty-three, I was the only preacher in that city. From that experience I learned you can't clean up men or a city from the outside; it just can't be done. Man's got heart disease, he needs a new heart. He needs to hear the doctrine of the new birth! I couldn't clean up that town. We tried three times!

I went to Austin, Texas to meet the Christian governor and I took a suitcase full of affidavits, duly fixed, signed and sealed and before I got back from the governor's office, the Texas Rangers were there. Two Texas Rangers were assigned as my body guards [one was Frank Hamer, author's note]. Wherever I went they went with me or I would have been murdered. And they let me put the first padlock on, and we padlocked 267 of those places! They let me strike a match to 1,200 slot machines and we burned them up! They let me and the mayor lead the procession of over 1,200 public women who were led out of the city limits and we cleaned up that city as clean as a hound's tooth. And it stayed clean two or three days. They kept coming back. New ones would come from everywhere. But I say that city cleaned up three times! And in those sixteen months I preached to everybody in that town. I didn't build a nice little church building hoping they would come. I went down to where sinners were! I preached in every house of ill fame. I preached in the dance hall. I preached on street corners. I preached everywhere, I had a congregation of 50,000 souls! And in that sixteen month period I baptized 2,361 persons.

The intriguing story of the beginnings of Borger, Texas are certainly enlivened by the added first-hand knowledge of Rolfe Barnard. Why has Rolfe Barnard been omitted from the town's early history when he played such an integral role in bringing law and order to this frontier town? One explanation may be that all of the 50,000 residents of Borger at that time only knew him as "the Preacher." There were no other clergymen in this city during this time. Rolfe Barnard was the *man* who did the marrying and the burying. When someone lay dying they sent for "the Preacher"; when somebody lay ill in the hospital they called for "the Preacher"; when somebody needed to be buried or married they called for "the

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Preacher." This could explain his anonymity.

The lawlessness in "Booger Town" had risen to such a fever pitch that the District Attorney John A. Holmes was shot and killed on September 18, 1929. When the Texas Rangers came to town to instill martial law it was Rolfe Barnard at the lead with Captain Frank Hamer by his side! For an entire month the Rangers were enlisted to bring order to the town and the main character who was given the high privilege of padlocking all the doors and setting the first match to the slot machines and leading the procession of 1,200 prostitutes out of town was Rolfe Barnard! It was Rolfe Barnard who established the First Baptist Church of Borger, Texas which still stands today. It was he who brought religion to "Booger Town." Hopefully, the history of Borger, Texas can be rewritten to include the name of Rolfe Barnard.

We turn to his comments regarding this sensational time in his ministry with the following from his sermon, "I Remember Dixie":

In my early ministry, a little over thirty-one years ago, I went to the world's largest oil town that just sprung up in a cow pasture. In a little while there were 50,000 people there crawling over one another's backs to see who could get to hell the quickest. I was the only preacher there for sixteen months and I watched men die. For sixteen months I preached on average three funerals a day. I preached as many as seven funerals in one day! I was just a boy twenty-three years old and I lived with death. I lived in the County Hospital where the old folks would be sent, you know, and there to rot and die and when they were dying they would call for "the Preacher." I lived in the houses of ill fame and the saloons where men would get shot and poor women would get shot or die of disease, and just before they died they would call for "the Preacher" and there they would look in my face and beg me not to let them go to hell. They would want me to pray for them but it would be too late to pray then.

I remember Dixie. Dixie was the queen of the dance hall girls in my oil field town. When she came to die she was just twenty-three years old. She had already been married seven times, and was now living, of course, in sin with an eighth man. I remember when Dixie sent somebody to me and said she wanted the Preacher to tie the knot, that she was going