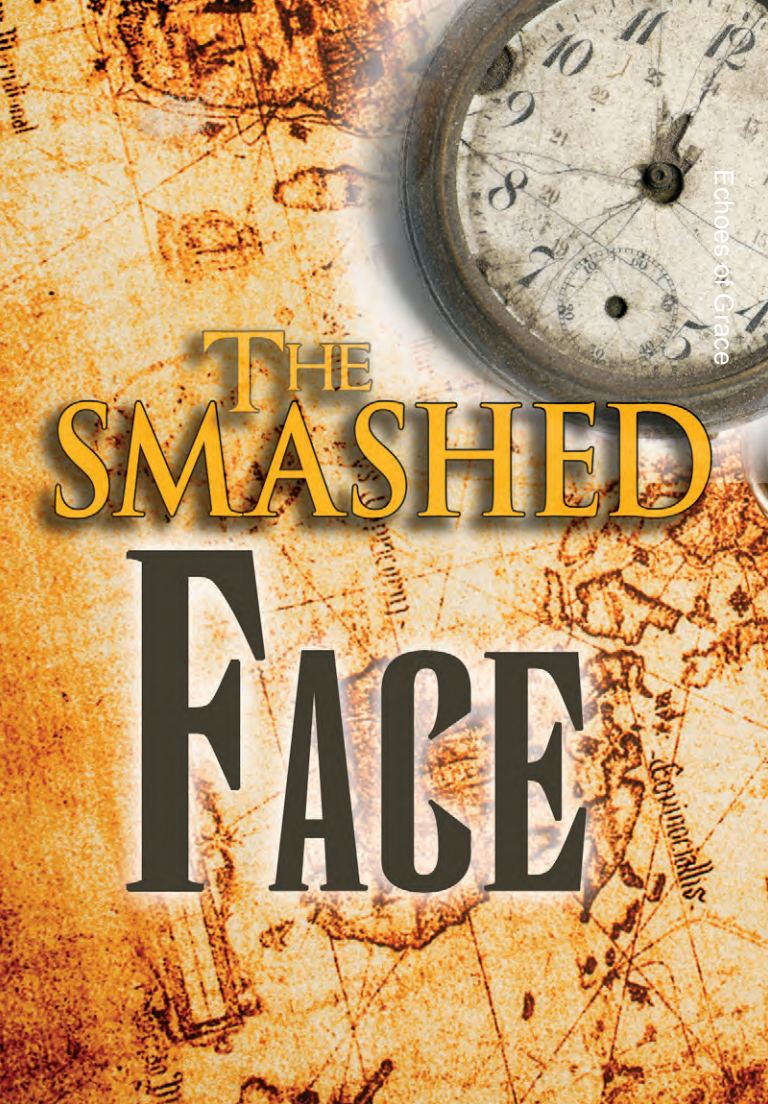


Echoes of Grace



THE  
SMASHED  
FACE

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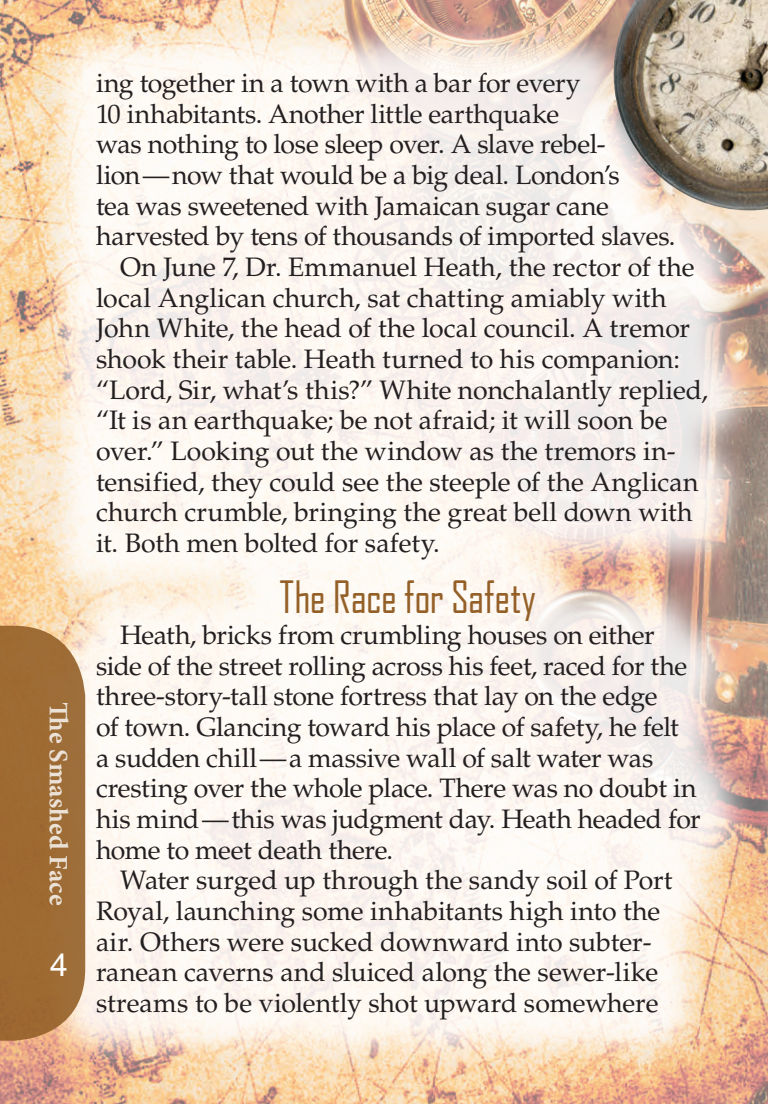
# THE SMASHED FACE

Its gorgeous smashed face carries a powerful message. Its French hands stretch out in mute and powerful testimony. Three hundred and thirty-four years ago its little twitching stopped.

On the morning of June 7, 1692, Port Royal, Jamaica, lay lethargically in the oppressive tropical heat without the slightest breeze to ruffle the English flags flying over its six forts. The water lay smooth as glass in the large harbor. Bigger than New York City, only Boston could rival its size and sophistication in the British Americas. Rum, pirated gold, sugar and a vicious slave trade fueled a booming economy. Wealthy traders strutted the streets in fashionable London finery while side-stepping drunken pirates and passing the hundreds of bars and bold prostitutes in the town no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile long and half that wide.

Once in a while little tremors made the pictures on the wall rattle but nothing stopped the glasses clink-



The background of the page is a collage of historical and navigational items. At the top left, there's a portion of an old map with latitude and longitude lines. In the top right, a pocket watch with Roman numerals is visible. On the right side, a lantern with a glass chimney and a handle is partially shown. The overall color palette is warm, with shades of brown, orange, and gold.

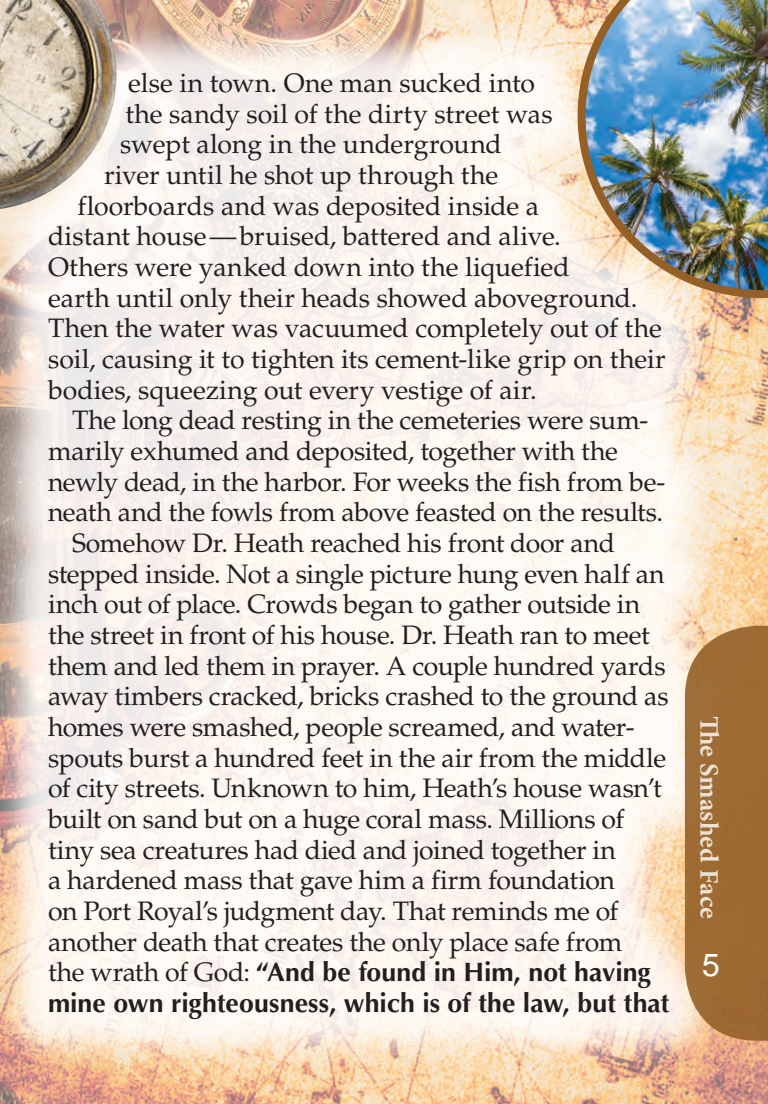
ing together in a town with a bar for every 10 inhabitants. Another little earthquake was nothing to lose sleep over. A slave rebellion—now that would be a big deal. London's tea was sweetened with Jamaican sugar cane harvested by tens of thousands of imported slaves.

On June 7, Dr. Emmanuel Heath, the rector of the local Anglican church, sat chatting amiably with John White, the head of the local council. A tremor shook their table. Heath turned to his companion: "Lord, Sir, what's this?" White nonchalantly replied, "It is an earthquake; be not afraid; it will soon be over." Looking out the window as the tremors intensified, they could see the steeple of the Anglican church crumble, bringing the great bell down with it. Both men bolted for safety.

## The Race for Safety

Heath, bricks from crumbling houses on either side of the street rolling across his feet, raced for the three-story-tall stone fortress that lay on the edge of town. Glancing toward his place of safety, he felt a sudden chill—a massive wall of salt water was cresting over the whole place. There was no doubt in his mind—this was judgment day. Heath headed for home to meet death there.


Water surged up through the sandy soil of Port Royal, launching some inhabitants high into the air. Others were sucked downward into subterranean caverns and sluiced along the sewer-like streams to be violently shot upward somewhere

The background is a collage of images. On the left, there is a close-up of a clock face with numbers 1 through 4 visible. In the top center, a portion of a globe is visible, showing latitude and longitude lines. On the right side, there is a circular inset showing a clear blue sky with several palm trees. The overall background has a warm, golden-brown, textured appearance, possibly representing sand or aged paper.

else in town. One man sucked into the sandy soil of the dirty street was swept along in the underground river until he shot up through the floorboards and was deposited inside a distant house—bruised, battered and alive. Others were yanked down into the liquefied earth until only their heads showed aboveground. Then the water was vacuumed completely out of the soil, causing it to tighten its cement-like grip on their bodies, squeezing out every vestige of air.

The long dead resting in the cemeteries were summarily exhumed and deposited, together with the newly dead, in the harbor. For weeks the fish from beneath and the fowls from above feasted on the results.

Somehow Dr. Heath reached his front door and stepped inside. Not a single picture hung even half an inch out of place. Crowds began to gather outside in the street in front of his house. Dr. Heath ran to meet them and led them in prayer. A couple hundred yards away timbers cracked, bricks crashed to the ground as homes were smashed, people screamed, and water-spouts burst a hundred feet in the air from the middle of city streets. Unknown to him, Heath's house wasn't built on sand but on a huge coral mass. Millions of tiny sea creatures had died and joined together in a hardened mass that gave him a firm foundation on Port Royal's judgment day. That reminds me of another death that creates the only place safe from the wrath of God: **"And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that**



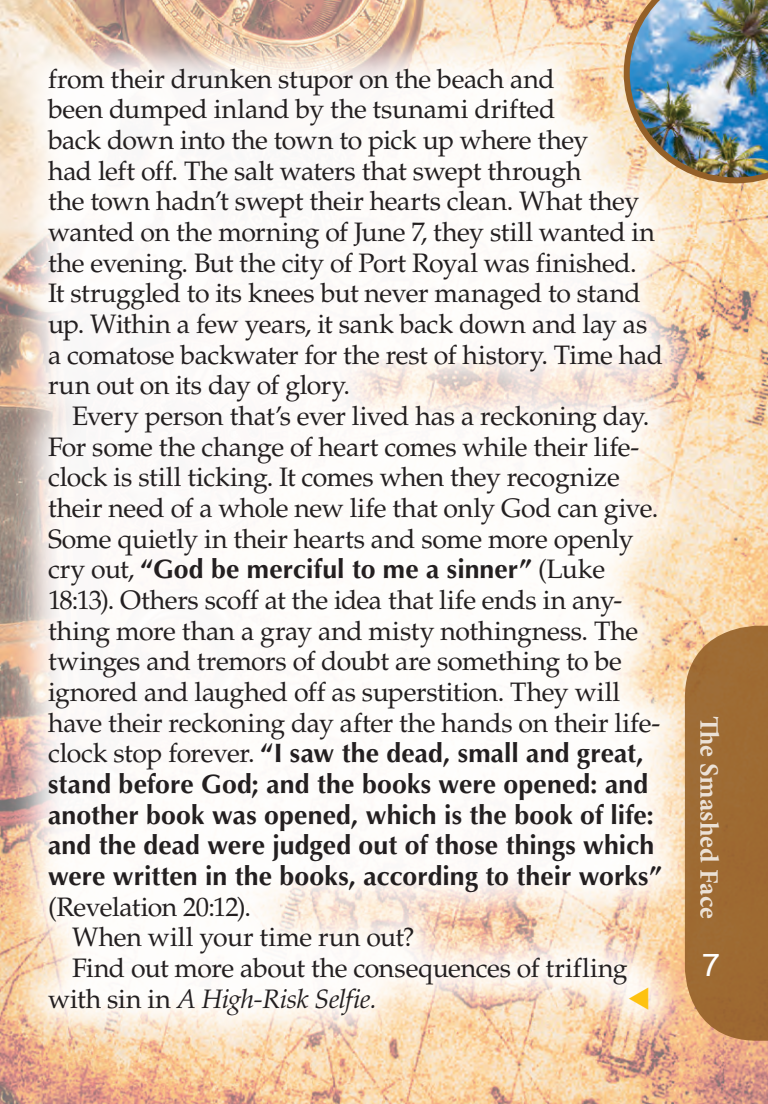
**which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9).**

The smashed face of the designer pocket watch, designed by the French maker Blondel, stopped with its hands pointing to 11:43 a.m. Six minutes after it began, the quake was over. Time had run out for 35% of the town population carried off by the waves or buried in the sand. In the ensuing three weeks, disease and injuries claimed another 35%.

It wasn't as though there had been no warning. But the warnings were ignored. God warns us about sin too. It's rather hard to miss the point of **“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). But many dismiss such bold messages because God doesn't tend to bring immediate judgment on sin. Too many abuse the fact that **“the Lord ... is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9). Like the citizens of Port Royal who scoffed at the little tremors that shook the town, they ignore the warning signs of coming disaster. But on June 7, 1692, at 11:43 a.m., the smashed face of the pocket watch recorded the end of Port Royal. When will your clock stop ticking?

## A Change of Heart


Like the scavengers in the harbor, scavengers on land broke down the remaining locked doors and looted every chest of gold and every valuable they could lay their hands on. Pirates who'd been lifted

The background of the page is a vintage-style map with various lines and text. In the top right corner, there is a circular inset showing a clear blue sky with several palm trees. The text is overlaid on this background.

from their drunken stupor on the beach and been dumped inland by the tsunami drifted back down into the town to pick up where they had left off. The salt waters that swept through the town hadn't swept their hearts clean. What they wanted on the morning of June 7, they still wanted in the evening. But the city of Port Royal was finished. It struggled to its knees but never managed to stand up. Within a few years, it sank back down and lay as a comatose backwater for the rest of history. Time had run out on its day of glory.

Every person that's ever lived has a reckoning day. For some the change of heart comes while their life-clock is still ticking. It comes when they recognize their need of a whole new life that only God can give. Some quietly in their hearts and some more openly cry out, **"God be merciful to me a sinner"** (Luke 18:13). Others scoff at the idea that life ends in anything more than a gray and misty nothingness. The twinges and tremors of doubt are something to be ignored and laughed off as superstition. They will have their reckoning day after the hands on their life-clock stop forever. **"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"** (Revelation 20:12).

When will your time run out?

Find out more about the consequences of trifling with sin in *A High-Risk Selfie*. 

# A HIGH-RISK SELFIE



A 33-year-old man from Lake Elsinore, California, was walking down a gravel road behind his house with his young nephew. Strolling along, they came across a four-foot-long, live rattlesnake on the roadbed.

The man saw his chance to take a one-of-a-kind selfie. The selfie would be impressive and garner him a lot of attention on the Internet.

Maneuvering behind the snake, he deftly put the sole of his shoe on the back of its neck, pinching it to the ground so it couldn't move. Then bending over, he picked up the snake, holding it with one hand

behind its head and the other hand near the tail. Next, he draped the snake like a feathered boa around his neck and shoulders. He held the snake still for a few seconds until it felt like the reptile had calmed down. Then, he let go of the snake's head to reach for his smartphone in his pocket in order to snap the selfie.







The instant he released it, the snake lashed out and sank its teeth into his hand, injecting poison through its hollow upper fangs!

As fast as he could, the man threw the snake off his shoulders to the ground. Within seconds, the quick-acting poison went to work, causing an intense pain and swelling. Trembling as he held his cell phone, he called 911, explaining he was bitten by a rattlesnake and gave his location. (Over 800 snakebites are reported every year in California.) A short time later paramedics rushed him to a hospital where he received emergency medical attention. Doctors were able to save the man's life, but several days later they were still not certain they would be able to save the man's hand, which had turned black from the poison. If the man loses his hand, it would be a very steep price to pay for his foolishness.

## Deadlier Than a Rattlesnake

I think most people would shun ever draping a live rattlesnake around their necks, but there is something even deadlier that has become all too familiar to us and that we hold close to ourselves: That something is sin.

What is so deadly about sin? Sin brings about the death of the soul. God has said, "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die**" (Ezekiel 18:4). Death always carries with it the idea of separation. Physical death is separation of the soul from the body. Spiritual death is separation of the soul from God. Those who pass out of this world in a state of sin will pass into a lost

eternity where they will be forever separated from God and His goodness and grace.

What brings them to that place of suffering and endless pain? Sin and the love of it. They draped it about their heart, firmly believing it would do them no harm, not knowing and not caring that **“the sting of death is sin”** (1 Corinthians 15:56).

A selfie is a visual record that is often posted on social media. Once posted, it becomes virtually impossible to erase. Sin is like that too. God knows all about us. Once we have committed sin, we might forget about it. After all, we do have faulty memories and faulty judgment, and we like to conveniently forget about things that trouble us. But God doesn't forget our sins. **“God requireth that which is past”** (Ecclesiastes 3:15). In His patience He might bear long with our sins, but He will never just forget them. He knows the sins we have committed, with the perfect knowledge that He knows all things. Someday He will bring each person that has not received His gift of forgiveness into judgment for what they have done in this life.

## God Forgives

God's way isn't to forget about sin; it is to *forgive* sin. To make a way that sinners might be forgiven, He sent His Son into the world. The Lord Jesus went all the way to Calvary's cross where He died in the sinner's place. The pure and sinless Lamb of God gave His



life for others. On the cross, He paid the penalty for sin (death) for all those who believe. At the cross, His blood was shed so that sinners might have the ugly stain of sin washed away once and forever.

**“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”** (Isaiah 1:18).


The gifts of forgiveness and cleansing are now being offered to every man, woman and child in the whole world. It is a gift received the moment a person puts their wholehearted trust in the Saviour.

**“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”** (Ephesians 2:8).

Some people might rashly think they don't need the Saviour because God will never call them into judgment for their sins.

What a terrible mistake they are making! The man who attempted taking a selfie with the snake draped around his neck made a terrible mistake. He had no grounds for believing the snake would not bite. Those who reject Christ are making a terrible mistake too. They have absolutely no grounds for believing they will escape God's judgment against sin.

The man bitten by the rattlesnake sought medical help at once. Won't you realize the seriousness of your sins and come to the Saviour that you might be saved?

Discover the danger of following impulses and ignoring God in *I Just Couldn't Help Myself*. 



# I JUST COULDN'T HELP MYSELF



"I just couldn't help myself; that bud smelled sooooo good," said David Allen Thompson as he was booked in the small Pennsylvania town of Charleroi. The list of charges looks pretty nasty ...

- theft by unlawful taking,
- receiving stolen property,
- tampering with/fabricating physical evidence,
- possession of a small amount of marijuana, and
- possession of drug paraphernalia.

So where did 27-year-old David get his marijuana stash? From the desk of Officer David Kimball at the Charleroi Regional Police station. David had dropped by of his own free will to do the good deed of telling the police where they could find some real criminals. In the process, he noticed an evidence bag of “weed” sitting on the officer’s desk for a case that he was writing up. While the officer was distracted, he slipped it into his pocket.

When Officer Kimball couldn’t find the bag, he headed outside the police station hunting for David. Within five minutes, Kimball spotted him walking by. Upon being asked, “What did you do with the weed?” David dropped the baggie back into Officer Kimball’s hands.

Inside the station while he was being booked, David said, “Man, I’m guilty. Can’t you just give me a fine or something?”

Before you stop shaking your head and wondering about David’s IQ, answer this little questionnaire for yourself:

Are there any big criminals out there that you’d be happy for God to take care of?





While you're waiting for "the big ones" to get punished, have you done anything wrong yourself?

Do some sins smell soooo good that a little bit once in a while is irresistible for a mere human?

Would you tell God the size His fine should be?

Remember, **"a just weight and balance are the Lord's"** (Proverbs 16:11). He'll do a perfect job of examining your "rap sheet." Will it be wiped clean by the blood of Christ, or will it require you to answer for yourself for what you yourself have to say "Man, I'm guilty" about?

“Now is the  
accepted time;  
behold,  
now is the day  
of salvation.”

2 **C**orinthians 6:2



## ECHOES OF GRACE

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*Jesus said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).*

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