

**A Sudden Calamity? No, It Was Set in Motion in the Past!**

*Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin,  
when it is full-grown, brings forth death (James 1:15)*

The media coverage of the stunning demise of Joe Paterno, the winningest college football coach who failed to report to the police the alleged molestation of a child by someone whom he knew, has been complete and thorough. But it won't or is incapable of talking about why his inaction was truly wrong. Paterno's exemplary life notwithstanding, that is, up until now, broke a universal moral law stipulated in Leviticus 5:1: "If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible." His omission was committed in 2002, but 9 years later, this inaction resulted in the destruction of six decades of a distinguished career. This clearly captures truth of Numbers 32:23, "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." Fortunately, Mr. Paterno is still alive despite the sin that came back to haunt him but there was a man, also involved in football, whose sin in the past came back to claim his very life.

Not many young people would remember an old NFL lineman, Lyle Alzado, but trust me, he was a one scary dude! Playing for the infamous Los Angeles Raiders in the 1980s (yes, once upon a time Los Angeles had a professional NFL team), he was the meanest, toughest and most feared lineman in all of football. Being also popular with the fans, he appeared in commercials and even starred in his own TV sitcom. Unfortunately, in 1991 Alzado, who was only 42 years old, was diagnosed with an inoperable brain cancer. He was certain as to what caused it: the banned steroids he took while trying to make a comeback to football a year earlier. Having used this powerful yet very dangerous substance during all his playing days, Alzado confessed, "It got me where I wanted, but it also got me very sick." Candidly speaking about himself in public, perhaps for the first time, he added, "The big massive guy I was, I hate to admit this, but it was all phony." After receiving a series of radiation and chemotherapy, Alzado, appearing on a Christian program on television, looked more like a wimp than a powerful defensive tackle after losing 60 pounds; sadly, he died shortly after that confession.

I am not sure whether he ever came to know the Lord, but if his willingness to be on a Christian program meant anything, perhaps he did! Then he might have understood the meaning of "You may be sure that your sin will find you out." Or Galatians 6:7<sup>b</sup>-8<sup>a</sup> that says, "A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup> The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction." In the end, his sin certainly found him out and he surely reaped what he had sown. Be that as it may, hopefully, he also discovered something else about sin: "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Rom. 5:20<sup>b</sup>). That grace is none other than Jesus Christ who did "not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mat. 9:13<sup>b</sup>). Are you a Christian harboring a habitual sin? The time to stop is now! Repent unto the Lord and then talk to someone more spiritually

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mature to be held accountable so that you won't repeat the same sin. Are you that person who hesitates to come to Jesus because of the heaviness of your sin? Stop that nonsense because you are the person for whom Jesus came to this world! Believe that he died for your sin and put your trust in him.

#### **Further Reflection**

1. Examine how inaction on the part of David as the father of Amnon, who raped his own sister, (2 Sam. 13:1-22) eventually resulted another family tragedy (2 Sam. 13:23-38).
2. The concept of spiritual accountability was briefly mentioned. What is it and why is it important? (Jar

#### **Bible Reading**

Monday Proverbs 8 & Judges 9

Tuesday Proverbs 8 & Judges 9