

Commentary — From the Margins

Unanswered Prayers

You [Israel] were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth. [YHWH] saw it and spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said, “I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness ...” (Deut 32:18–20)

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As for you [Jeremiah], do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you. (Jer 7:16)

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[YHWH] said to me: “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.” (Jer 14:11–12)

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Therefore I [YHWH] will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them. (Ezek 8:18)

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Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, Thus says the Lord [YHWH], Is it to inquire of me that you come? As I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], I will not be inquired of by you. (Ezek 20:3)

1.

Within greater Christendom, it is customary for a Christian to ask others to pray for the person. Routinely, someone asks me to pray for this or that, usually for another’s health ...

Who told the person that God would answer his or her prayer? Who told the person that God would heal the person? Did another Christian go to the person and say some form of *If you obey God, He will heal you*; or say, *God is your healer, trust God and believe in Him and He will heal you*? I know this happens for I deal with the aftermath of unanswered prayers. I know that a Christian is damned by family members if the Christian trusts God to heal cancer—and equally damned by other Christians if the person turns to the medical profession for help. I know that this Christian believes cancer can be cured by herbal concoctions, and that Christian would have others trust God to heal. I know that doctors are still practicing, and that Christ, on the cross, called out, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matt 27:46), the passage Jesus cited being from Psalm 22:

To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? [physical]
 Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? [spiritual]
 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
 and by night, but I find no rest.
 Yet you are holy,
 enthroned on the praises of Israel.
 In you our fathers trusted;
 they trusted, and you delivered them.
 To you they cried and were rescued;
 in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
 But I am a worm and not a man,
 scorned by mankind and despised by the people.
 All who see me mock me;
 they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;
 "He trusts in the Lord; let Him deliver him;
 let Him rescue him, for he delights in Him!"
 Yet you are He who took me from the womb;
 you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.
 On you was I cast from my birth,
 and from my mother's womb you have been my God.
 Be not far from me,
 for trouble is near,
 and there is none to help.

(Ps 22:1–11 indented lines are spiritual portions of thought-couplets)

David wasn't certain that his prayers were being heard: his prayers were not being answered. David felt abandoned by the Lord, forsaken. And Jesus quoted the physical portion of the opening thought couplet as He died on the cross. He, too, felt as if God had forsaken Him.

Now in Matthew's Gospel, what do those mocking Jesus say,

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked Him, saying, "He saved others; He cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. *He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him.* For He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. (Matt 27:41–44 emphasis added).

Those who mocked Christ first quoted from Psalm 22:

"He trusts in the Lord; let Him deliver him;
 let Him rescue him, for he delights in Him!" (v. 8)

Jesus' quote was in response to the mocking of the chief priests ... does not the ignorant Christian who would tell an infant in Christ—or a Christian not yet born of spirit—that God will heal this person mock Jesus in a way analogous to how the chief priests mocked Jesus? The chief priests told Jesus and the crowd that *He trusts God, let God get Him down from the cross.* Now, take the "bite" out of this remark, and hear the words of one Sabbatarian Christian to another, *Trust God; God will heal you if it's His will. ... By His stripes we are healed. Let God deliver you from cancer*—and the pastor's wife died from untreated melanoma, the lesion began on her ankle and could have been easily removed at anytime for months. But Al Dennis of the former Worldwide Church of God preached that God would heal, and his wife believed him ... it was her decision,

not his, not to seek medical care. And she died prematurely because of her faith—not a bad thing when the decision is entirely of the person whose life is in jeopardy.

The Christian who would counsel another Christian to trust God to heal the person, however, bears on him or herself the blood of the Christian who trusted God to heal and wasn't healed ... this is correct: the Christian who is so ignorant as to tell another Christian to trust God to heal the person is guilty of murder if the one who received this counsel dies prematurely because he or she wasn't healed.

Can I say the preceding more loudly, or make the preceding more plain: if a Christian asks another Christian about healing, then the one who asks lacks the faith needed to be healed. This person may or may not be healed, but if healed the healing will be based upon the faith of the one who anoints the person ...

Who has so little love for another Christian that he or she would tell this other Christian to trust God, and to not seek professional medical care? Who would do that!? Again, who has so little understanding of God and of spiritual matters that he or she would interfere in the medical care of another? Who would hinder another Christian from taking prescribed medicine for, say, diabetes or heart problems? Who would tell another Christian to just, *Trust God*?

Again, yes, God can heal, and He will heal if healing suits His purposes. No faith is truly needed to be healed if it is the will of God to heal the person. Faith is needed when God doesn't heal; when God doesn't answer prayers; when the person is suffering and seemingly forsaken by God.

What about the admonition of James?

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.* Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (Jas 5:13–20 emphasis added)

What does James mean when he writes, *And the Lord will raise him up*? Elsewhere Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44) ... to be raised up is to be healed, but healed from death, the mortal enemy of all living persons. And within the context of James' admonition, the *prayer of faith* will have sins forgiven, with confession of sins producing healings: Jesus told His disciples after they had received the holy spirit, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (John 20:23). So James' admonition to call upon the elders may produce a physical healing, but more importantly, will produce a spiritual healing so that, if the sick die physically, they will be healed spiritually and will be raised up by Christ Jesus.

Does any Christian believe that if the elders of the Church anoints a seriously ill or injured person, the person will automatically recover? Yes, the person might recover.

Certainly it is within the power of God to heal the person. It was within the power of God to bring Jesus down from the cross alive on the day of His crucifixion, but doing so would have been contrary to the purpose for why the Logos entered His creation as His unique Son.

The Christian who is as the chief priests were, saying some form of, *He trusts in the Lord; let Him deliver him*, mocks Christ Jesus through this Christian's utter lack of spiritual understanding. Oh, this Christian will word his or her counsel in the jargon of piety: *God heals, trust God to deliver you*—and his or her victim dies from breast cancer, or a ruptured appendix. The death of his or her victim is on the Christian's head, as it should be.

Pause and consider: is God a puppet manipulated by strings? Pull this string and God will heal. Pull that string and God will find the Christian a parking space in a crowded parking lot? Pull those two strings together and God jumps through hoops. Does the Most High God do the bidding of mortal men? Even ancient Greeks in the glory of their paganism had Athena sitting on the rafters while Odysseus slew suitors; even Greek pagans knew that mortal men could not manipulate deities. Yet far too many Christians—particularly Sabbatarian Christians—believe that God will do their bidding, that all they have to do is utter their magical words.

But can God be manipulated by men?

In the form of a hymn, the first eight verses of Psalm 44 were regularly sung in the former Worldwide Church of God. These verses give glory to God for saving Israel, for delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt. But the psalm turns at the end of verse 8:

But you have rejected us and disgraced us
and have not gone out with our armies.
You have made us turn back from the foe,
and those who hate us have gotten spoil.
You have made us like sheep for slaughter
and have scattered us among the nations.
You have sold your people for a trifle,
demanding no high price for them.
You have made us the taunt of our neighbors,
the derision and scorn of those around us.
You have made us a byword among the nations,
a laughingstock among the peoples.
All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face
at the sound of the taunter and reviler,
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.
All this has come upon us,
though we have not forgotten you,
and we have not been false to your covenant.
Our heart has not turned back,
nor have our steps departed from your way;
yet you have broken us in the place of jackals
and covered us with the shadow of death.
If we had forgotten the name of our God
or spread out our hands to a foreign god,

would not God discover this?
 For He knows the secrets of the heart.
 Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long;
 we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.
 Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?
 Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!
 Why do you hide your face?
 Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?
 For our soul is bowed down to the dust;
 our belly clings to the ground.
 Rise up; come to our help!
 Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

(Ps 44:9–26 indented lines are spiritual portions of thought couplets)

For a moment, let us assume what these sons of Korah claimed was true: Israel had not forgotten the Lord, nor had Israel turned away from Him, nor had Israel been false to the covenant. Yet for some reason, the Lord would not hear Israel's prayers, nor support their troops ...

Why would the Lord assist the ancestors of the House of Judah but not then not support the people, their king[s], nor hear the supplications of this nations' priests? What changed—besides the Lord planting the children of Israel in the Promised Land, where Israel was to become the unblemished Passover lamb of God, sacrificed for the sins of many—

But the children of Israel crossed the Jordan with the “reproach of Egypt” firmly imbedded in their minds and hearts.

At that time [YHWH] said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time." So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised. For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of [YHWH]; [YHWH] swore to them that He would not let them see the land that [YHWH] had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. So it was their children, whom He raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. And [YHWH] said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. (Josh 5:2–9)

How can outward circumcision in the Promised Land roll away the *reproach of Egypt*, when what was removed were foreskins that covered the “heads” of the children of Israel? Were these foreskins the *reproach of Egypt*? Or was the *reproach of Egypt* a mindset opposing what circumcision represents?

Circumcision represents being made naked before God; circumcision represents returning to the garden of Eden to make again the decision Adam made to eat forbidden fruit. Circumcision represents being made naked so that the person's only covering [garment] is obedience; is belief of God leading to obedience. The uncircumcised person

is as a beast of the field, covered by a figurative hair coat symbolized by the hair coat (garment of skins) with which the Lord garmented Adam and Eve when He drove them from the Garden (Gen 3:21) ... Esau was born with this hair coat, which Jacob imitated with the skin of a goat (Gen 27:16); thus, Esau, a hairy man (Gen 25:25), wasn't hairy like a normal human male, but was hairy like a sasquatch. And Esau was hated by the Lord before birth; for Esau would have reminded the Lord of Adam and Eve and of why He drove the man from the Garden—

One command, *don't eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, and Adam couldn't keep it; for when Adam saw Eve eat of this tree, Adam believed his eyes rather than believed the Lord—and “faith” is nothing more than belief [*pisteos*] of God put into practice. Without belief of God, no person can please God. Without belief, unbelief prevails, with evil being nothing more than unbelief put into action.

The person who is circumcised of heart has received a second breath of life, thereby bringing to life the soul [*psuche*] of the person through the indwelling of the spirit of God [*pneuma Theou*] in the spirit of Christ [*pneuma Christou*] in the spirit of the man/person [*to pneuma tou 'anthropou*] that is in the soul of the person ... the reproach of Egypt is unbelief manifested as sin. The hair coat of a prophet represented the return of the reproach of Egypt whereas the glory that shone from the face of Moses represented to Israel unattainable glory—glory that Israel was prevented from having by the prohibition against kindling a fire on the Sabbath (Ex 35:3).

Now, with circumcision, whether outward or inward, representing being made naked before the Lord, with the circumcised person not realizing that he [physically] or he and she [spiritually] has been made naked before the Lord—as Adam and Eve didn't realize they were naked until they were no longer garmented by obedience, Christians assume that the giving of the spirit changed the dynamics of circumcision, with the Christian being garmented in Christ Jesus' righteousness as expressed by His obedience. Christians assume that outward circumcision is of little or no value to the Christian (it is of no value), and that circumcision of the heart is automatic with receipt of the holy spirit. It isn't automatic, however.

Receipt of a second breath of life—the breath of God [*pneuma Theou*—comes to the Christian as receipt of physical breath comes to the human infant. And as the male Israelite isn't circumcised until the eighth day of life (Gen 17:12), an infant son of God isn't circumcised of heart until this infant is spiritually equivalent to the physical Israelite ... eight days isn't much life, unless of course these eight days are those of the First Unleavened (Matt 26:17 — read the verse in Greek without adding extra words) and the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: Passover and Passover week, eight days that symbolize the Christian era [the First Unleavened] and the seven endtime years of tribulation [the Feast of Unleavened Bread].

Christians, collectively, will not be circumcised of heart until they are glorified and thus cross into the spiritual Promised Land, heaven. Christians, collectively, are not born of spirit and are not one with Christ Jesus. In fact, finding a Christian who has truly been born of God is a rare thing. And this brings me to where I want to begin as I near the conclusion of this Commentary.

The lament of the sons of Korah concerned the Lord not intervening in human affairs on Israel's behalf; not hearing and responding to the prayers of Israel ... for how long did

the fathers of Israel plead for relief from Egyptian servitude before the Lord intervened? Quite a while? Yes, for quite a while; for the Lord would not intervene until “the iniquity of the Amorites [was] complete” (Gen 15:16), meaning that Israel’s importance to the Lord was tempered through the Amorites, the Hittites, the Canaanites, others, great peoples who once knew God but chose to worship the creation rather than the Creator.

What was it that Hittite princes told Abraham, the Hittites themselves being a great people and roughly equal in might to the Egyptians?

And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, "I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." The Hittites answered Abraham, "*Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us.* Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead." Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. And he said to them, "If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place." (Gen 23:2–9 emphasis added)

Hittite princes recognized Abraham as a prince of God, a person equal in standing to themselves. This will now have Amorites and Canaanites being people like Abram/Abraham, people who would have recognized Abraham as a prince of God. So if the descendants of Abraham were to be removed from the land until the iniquity of the Amorites was complete, then the four hundred years Abraham’s descendants were to be in Egypt (Gen 15:13) are analogous in type to “the partial hardening [that] has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles come” to God (Rom 11:25), the fullness of Gentiles coming to God forming the chiral image of the fullness of Amorite iniquity. In both cases, Israel cannot enter or return to the Promised Land until—in the physical—the iniquity of Amorites was complete, and in the spiritual, until the fullness of Gentiles come to God. Thus, Israel functions as a firstborn stepson of God, not as either a natural son or spiritual son. And this is an important concept to keep in mind.

The sons of Korah—because of their ancestor—are as Christians (because of their ancestor) are, meaning that while the unbelief of Korah was not passed to his sons the faithfulness of Moses has not been inherited by either the sons of Korah or by Christians collectively. It is only the Elect who are as Moses was. It is only the Elect through the indwelling of Christ Jesus who are able to enter into the presence of God.

From the time a person—any person—is withdrawn from this world by God the Father and delivered to Christ Jesus, only a short while will pass before Christ is crucified for the person while he or she remains a sinner (Rom 5:8), with Christ raised from death in the person, thereby causing the person to be born of spirit through the indwelling of Christ Jesus [the spirit of Christ — *pneuma Christou*] ... the spirit of Christ enters into the spirit of the man/person [*to pneuma tou 'anthropou*] through the resurrection of Christ in the spirit of the person, the resurrected Christ figuratively giving birth to a living spirit in the person whereas before the spirit of the person had been without life; hence Matthew’s Jesus declaring, *Permit the dead to bury the dead of themselves* (Matt 8:22).

To think spiritually, a disciple must overcome constraints time and its passage place upon thoughts that, themselves, are timeless. Therefore, while it will seem impossible for Christ to literally be crucified for a 21st-Century disciple while the disciple remains a sinner—with Christ being crucified in the 1st-Century—when the disciple steps outside of time, the crucifixion of Jesus occurs “today” while the calling of the disciple (born nearly two millennia later in this world) also occurs “today”; i.e., in the same unchanging moment in which Abraham washed the Lord’s feet and in which the two witnesses are killed, events separated by nearly four millennia in this world.

The chronological passage of time only occurs inside the creation, and doesn’t occur outside of the creation. Therefore, the person without the mind of Christ can never understand the things of God, including Bible prophecy, whereas the infant son of God—less than eight days of age in equivalency—while possessing the mind of Christ still thinks as a spiritual infant and cannot understand the things of his parents, the Father and His Beloved.

It is here where problems enter Christendom: infant sons of God, too young to be circumcised of heart, tend to think that they are all grown up, and thinking of themselves as *grownups*, they can teach the principles of God to those who are not yet born of spirit ...

From when the Father becomes interested in a person, foreknowing the person and drawing the person out of this world, a tentative clock begins a countdown that involves five stages: foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. Without the person being aware that he or she is under observation, the Father comes to know the person and to determine whether He will draw the person from this world, delivering the person to Christ Jesus for Christ to call, justify, and glorify. This person is, before being called, known by the Father and predestined to be glorified. And while decades can pass between when the person is initially foreknown by the Father and when the person is called, only a short while passes—usually 220 days or less—between when the person is called and when the person is born of spirit [inwardly glorified]. It seems that within 220 days of being called, the Father and the Son know whether a person will make it as a son or God or whether the person will wash out. And if the person will wash out, the spirit is not given: the person dies spiritually as fruit that falls in the June drop.

The Christian who is born of God and the Christian whom the Father didn’t deliver to Christ Jesus are comparable to a fetus coming to full-term birth and a fetus that self-aborts before full-term birth. The one lives; the other dies before drawing the breath of life into his or her lungs. And the one that dies was never born of spirit and will never be born of spirit because in the short while between being called and glorified, the person tasted the goodness of God and for whatever reason, threw the goodness of God back into His face—

How can a Christian throw the goodness of God—His mercy—back into His face? Would professing to be a Christian but consciously not keeping the Commandments be throwing God’s mercy back into His face? Yes, that would be the case. How about placing physical acquisition of wealth or power before the pursuit of righteousness? Certainly that would be mocking of the Father and the Son. How about setting oneself up as a teacher when not called to teach? Yes. How about counseling other disciples

when not called as a counselor? Certainly. How about telling another Christian that God will heal the person ...

Who is the person so filled with him or herself that the person would commit God to doing what God consciously has chosen not to do?

If a Christian has been faithful to God and has not turned away from Him—has been as the sons of Korah claimed to be—even to keeping the Sabbath and doing those things that are pleasing to God, striving to be holy as God is holy, will God heal this Christian? Will God answer the prayer of this Christian? If He wouldn't answer the prayers of Israel, what the sons of Korah claimed, why would He answer the prayers of the Christian?

The preceding is not a question to be lightly dismissed; for God isn't answering the prayers of Christians. Many prayers are made but very few are answered in the affirmative. Typically, Christians are not being miraculously healed. Rather, God seems far too willing to let the Christian suffer day after day, not seeming to intervene in any way.

Should Christians not pray what the sons of Korah inscribed in a *maskil*? Rouse yourself, God! Wake up! Get to work.

But no healing occurs. Instead of a healing, a miserable and lonely death occurs, often from cancer—

Again, God can heal. There is no reason why He cannot heal if that was His intension ... but who told the Christian that God would heal him or her? Who is this liar? A Christian minister, a false teacher? Yes, a false teacher. Someone who has no business teaching others but is in need of being taught him or herself.

Without doubt, can God heal any person of whatever ails the person? Without doubt! But will God heal in this present era? Almost always, NO! For a healing would disrupt the ongoing demonstration that has gone "critical" and is ready to explode.

The Christian who would have another Christian trust God to heal the person is the worse sort of meddler, knowing nothing of the ways of God but presuming to know the mind of God.

In 1975, I had a red fir snag fall across the top of me. I have told the story before. I was putting a Russian coupling in a white pine log at 66 feet. The log was still four feet or a little more in diameter. I cut a little too deep. There was tension on the log, and it snapped. I felt it let go, and I threw my saw a dozen or more feet to the side—and the log threw me: I landed on my saw.

Face down, I heard the Catskiner holler, *Look out!*

I tried to get up, to scramble away, but I couldn't: I felt like I was being held down. I fought whatever was preventing me from moving, and rolled hard to my right, only to look up and see the red fir snag falling on me. I got my hands up. The snag bounced up twenty feet or so and fell across me a second time, bouncing up again but only to be thrown two hundred yards or more out over the canyon.

If I had stayed where I was being pinned to the ground, the snag would have fallen beside me. A near miss. Everyone would have thanked God, especially me.

But when I saw the snag hurled out over the canyon, the snag thrown in relative distance and in a similar arc to me hurling sidearm a push broom handle, the snag being three feet in diameter and about 120 feet long, I realized that me rolling suddenly to my

right had caused an angel to reveal his presence, not in a visible way, but in what was done.

I bounced to me feet, excited about what happened ... the Catskinner was ashen green. He said, *You got somebody looking out for you*. He didn't expect to see me get up. And from that day on, he was afraid of me; afraid to ride in the same pickup; afraid to work the same landing. And I realized why there are not more public miracles.

Just as Israel at Sinai asked that the Lord never again speak directly to Israel, the public today is not ready for miracles.

Unanswered prayers are prayers that either should not have been asked, or that need not be answered.

For a Christian to meddle with the faith of another Christian, telling the weak in faith that *God heals, trust God*, the Christian does a great disservice to the other, a disservice that often results in the premature physical death of the one weak in faith, thereby placing that person's blood on the Christian's head ... when I am asked about God healing, I tell the person to seek sound medical advice, not the quackery of folk medicine which can have merit, but usually doesn't. If someone has to ask, the *someone* lacks the faith necessary to die trusting God—and without this faith (the faith to die physically), there is no reason for God to heal the person unless God has immediate work for the person to do. The testing of the person's faith is of greater worth to God than the person's physical life.

Just so there is no doubt: Never tell anyone that *God heals, trust God!* For on most occasions, God heals *death* by raising the person from death. He isn't overly concerned about the fleshly body.

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