

## Resurrection as a Way of Life: Part Three

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[EMSB theme fades in]

Hey everybody, I'm Tim Mackie, and this is my podcast, "Exploring My Strange Bible." I am a card-carrying Bible history and language nerd who thinks that Jesus of Nazareth is utterly amazing and worth following with everything that you have. On this podcast, I'm putting together the last twenty years' worth of lectures and sermons, where I've been exploring the strange and wonderful story of the Bible and how it invites us into the mission of Jesus and the journey of faith. And I hope this can all be helpful for you, too. I also helped start this thing called BibleProject. We make animated videos and podcasts and classes about all kinds of topics in Bible and theology. You can find all those resources at [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com). With all that said, let's dive into the episode for this week.

[EMSB theme fades out]

All right, well, this is episode three of a five-part teaching series that we're doing on the ideas of "resurrection" and "new creation" in the New Testament, in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. In this teaching, we're going to dive into one of the most exhilarating and beautiful chapters in all of the Apostle Paul's writings, in Romans 8.

And what we're going to watch him do is retell the story from Genesis all the way to the end—to Revelation—with the imagery of the Exodus story from the Old Testament book of Exodus. It's all about a story of people groaning in slavery, finding liberation through the deliverer that God raises up, and then going into freedom in the promised land. And that basic storyline provides the template for the whole Bible, but also it gives us a way of thinking about the hope of resurrection. And that's what we're going to watch Paul unpack.

So there you go. This is an amazing chapter and section of the New Testament. It's worth many, many cups of tea, and many hours of pondering and meditation, and so let's dive in and see what happens.

[Musical break (2:12–2:18)]

The Bible—especially the first three quarters of the Bible, that Christians call the “Old Testament”—has an amazing, amazing set of resources, helping us learn how to process our anxiety and our grief and confusion. And a handful of books in particular—there’s one whole book of the Bible dedicated to teaching God’s people how to grieve. It’s called the “Book of Lamentations.” Don’t read it if you’re in a good mood, but if you are in a state like what I’m describing, it’s precisely the place to go to learn how to pour out your emotions and your grief before God.

Now there’s another whole book dedicated to teaching us the language of grief and anxiety before God. It’s called the Book of Psalms—fully half of which is people angry and confused at God because of what’s happening in their lives and in the world. And there’s one, as we begin—as we think about Romans 8—there’s one particular poem, in the book of Psalms, that I think is relevant and that’s important for us to hear. It’s from what we call Psalm 31.

And the poet says, “Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress. My eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning. My strength fails because of my affliction and my bones grow weak.” There’s seven lines that I’ve put here in front of us [Tim refers to visual]—and notice that every single line ends with some description of the poet’s feelings and emotions and state of being. Do you see that right there?

And it’s really powerful vocabulary: *distress, sorrow, grief, anguish. Groaning, affliction, and weakness.* [Tim refers to visual] I put groaning there, in yellow and bold. Why? Because “groaning” is unique, in this part of the poem. Notice that all of those refer to something you feel, an emotional state. And some of you might resonate with these words and these feelings: distress, anguish.

But “groaning” is not a state that you find yourself in, is it? This one sticks out in the poem. Groaning is something that you do. What’s groaning? It’s a sound that you make. Do you see how that sticks out there? Everything else in the poem is reflecting this distress—this emotional disorientation of the poet—but groaning’s different. Groaning is something you do—it’s a sound that you make when you feel this way.

The Hebrew word for groaning there—you can see it there—it’s one of the words—you have to clear your throat when you say the last letter, *’anakh, ’anakh*. And it’s one of these words—many languages have these words—where what the word means is what it sounds like—kind of like “arg,” in English, or something like that—or “ugh” or “act,” something.

Remember Kathy, the cartoon—she would always say “Act, you know”? So, *’anakh*—it sounds like the sound that you make when something heavy is put on you, right? Of,

like, exhaling. It's this—it's verbal, right? It's something you say, but it's something you say when you don't have words to express all of these feelings—you with me? *'Anakh*.

And this—it's the sound that I have made more times in the last sixty days, on turning on my news apps, and *'anakh*—it's not what I said. What I said was like, "Oh, no"—that's what I said. And you know, you can probably mark some of the moments where you first learned the news of these horrifying tragedies that have happened in the last few months. *That's enough*—really significant.

It's not an uncommon word in the Bible, but it's a word that's often used to describe how the biblical poets and prophets vocalize and work through their pain before God. It's also an interesting word because of the first time that it appears. On—the first time that somebody is *'anakh-ing*, groaning—doing this in the Bible—if you just start at page one and you look for this word as you read through, the first time you see somebody doing this is very significant, and it relates to Romans 8.

Here's the paragraph—and some of you will recognize the moment in the story immediately. It's from Exodus 2, and we're told, "During that long period with the king of Egypt, and the Israelites *'anakh-ed*—they groaned under the weight of their slavery. And they cried out, and their cry for help, because of their slavery, it went up to God. And God heard their *'anakhim*—he heard their groaning. And he remembered his covenant, his promise with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so God looked on the Israelites, and he was concerned about them."

This comes from the setup to what famous story in the Bible? The book's named after it—the Exodus story. And this is the key moment, right? The reason why it's important that the king of Egypt died is: this is one of the kings of Egypt that saw this large, expanding immigrant population of Israelites in Egypt. And he believed it was a national security threat. And so he confined them all to slave labor camps, and they started building storage cities—this is all in Exodus 1.

And then not only is he grinding them into the dirt through slave labor, he starts the genocide. He starts killing all of the young boys—if you know the story—throwing them into the Nile River. And so this moment in the story comes at the pinnacle of their suffering, and of the oppression of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And what is it that the people of Israel do? They *groan*.

And here it's significant because their groaning is—it's under the weight of their slavery—but there's something more, because who are these people in the story of the Bible? These are the people—this is the family of Abraham. These are the people that God said that he was going to restore his blessing and salvation to all of the nations—through this family, somehow. And where do we find this family that's marked for God's purposes in the world? They're being annihilated under slavery and suffering.

And so their groaning—their *'anakh*—isn't just that it's a horrible circumstance. It's this awful tension between who they believed God was and what reality is like. It's this tension that arises because they believe in God's promise of who they are and what they're supposed to be about, and then the reality of their suffering seems to contradict what God said he was going to do. And their groaning comes out of that—are you with me—out of that tension there. “God *said* he would do this. Not only is that not happening—just the opposite is happening—we're being annihilated.” *'Anakh*. “This doesn't make any sense to me. That's where this groaning comes out of.

And so if you know the story—or have seen the movie, as I often joke—you know how this story goes. Because precisely as they're groaning, and as the Egyptians are throwing Israelite babies into the river, there's one Israelite baby that does get thrown into the river, but he doesn't drown. Rather, he is rescued, and he enters into the family of Pharaoh. What's this guy's name? It's Moses. And so Pharaoh's own evil becomes his downfall, as God raises up this Israelite boy—rescues him out of the river—to become the one who will deliver the people of Israel from Egypt's evil and injustice.

And so God hears their groaning. He doesn't ignore it, but the way—and the timeline—in which God works—it's not comfortable. It puts God's people in a state of wondering and groaning. And so as the centuries went by, the Israelites told and retold this story. They retold it on an annual basis in the spring festival called Passover. And they ate the story in this symbolic meal.

And that story—the story right here, of God hearing the groaning of his people—this became really important to Israelites and Jews of later centuries, so much so that later Israelites, they would look back to this story in the past, when God heard their groaning and delivered them—they would use it as a way of talking about hope for the future.

So centuries later, you get somebody like the prophet Isaiah, and Israel's undergoing another time of great suffering and oppression, under different bad guys—a lot of bad guys in the Bible—a lot of bad guys in the world—and what does Isaiah do? This is so powerful.

Look—when he looks to the future, and he looks and calls out to God for hope—look at how he talks about it. He says, “Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord. Clothe yourself with strength”—and actually, this comes from the Exodus story too. One of the lines that gets repeated throughout the Exodus story is that God “delivered his people with a”—some of you know it—with a what? “A strong hand and an outstretched arm.” It's repeated. That's how—it's this image of defeating Israel's “Egypt,” and then liberating his people.

And so Isaiah says to God, “Is your arm asleep right now? God's arm must be asleep because look at the state of things. So wake up, O arm of the Lord. Wake up, just like you did back in days gone by, in generations of old. Wasn't it you who dried up the sea,

the waters of the great deep? Wasn't it you who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed, the liberated slaves of Israel, could pass through?"

Do you see this? He's saying, "Look at what you did in the past—do it again. Wake up. Are you asleep at the wheel? Where are you?" And then Isaiah, he says, "Well, God did it in the past. He stuck by his promises in the past. He'll do it again in the future somehow," which is where he goes. He says, "Those that the Lord has rescued will one day return. They will enter Zion with singing, and everlasting joy will crown their heads, and gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow"—and this last line of this poem—"groaning will flee."

The thing that has marked the people of God from the beginning in their slavery, it's the very thing that will go away one day when God saves and redeems his people—when he liberates them from slavery. How you guys doing?

This is the story. This is one of the main storylines, just pumping right through the whole of the Bible. It just gets repeated and retold, over and over and over again. And it's a story that we resonate with deeply because we know what it's like to groan, don't we? Most humans know what it's like to groan. And being one of God's people—being a follower of Jesus—it's strange, because your groaning actually doesn't go away. It actually gets intensified if you decide to follow Jesus.

Because all of a sudden, the contradiction between who you believe God is and what he's doing in the world, and then what you actually see going on in the world that's horrifying—that tension is increased for you, if you decide to follow Jesus—are you with me? You actually groan more. If you don't want to groan, don't follow Jesus, right? And if you are going to follow Jesus, then I'm signing up for a whole lot of groaning—a whole lot of, just like, *what's happening?*

And so this—I would submit to you—this is the story. And as we're going to see, it's the very language that Paul is inviting us into, here in Romans, in Romans 8. Paul has a deep conviction that God has done what Isaiah hoped for and said that God would do. Paul the Apostle, [and] all the other early Christians, had this deep conviction that God's arm "woke up" and did something.

And what God's arm did was come and be among us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. And his announcement of the Kingdom of God was this act of liberation. This is why most of the New Testament accounts of Jesus are trying to put Jesus forward as "a new Moses" figure—a deliverer who's going to bring redemption to God's people.

This is why Jesus chose Passover as the moment to explain who he was and what his death was going to be all about. And so Paul's conviction is that the act of liberation, it's happened and is still happening—that Jesus lived for us, as the kind of human that we're made to be but have failed to be. Jesus died for us, to take into himself all of the

consequences of the sin and the pain and the evil and the injustice that we unleash into the world—he absorbed it, and he took it into himself. He let it destroy him. And then he overcame it on our behalf in his resurrection from the dead.

And Paul's deepest conviction, in this letter to the Romans, is that when somebody—it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from—your gender, your social, situation, whatever category—your race—any human being who looks to Jesus as Messiah and Lord and grabs onto him in faith and in trust—that all of a sudden, what is true about Jesus becomes true of that person. That Jesus became what we are so that we could become what he is, as we grab onto him in faith.

And so this is all linked together for Paul. In this key statement, he says—before, this is all set up. I tricked you. I didn't trick you; I just—this is all set up to read the paragraph, so that we can understand what Paul's trying to say. Just a few sentences before where we're going to pick up here, he says this very powerful statement, right here. He says, "Listen, if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal body because of the Spirit who lives in you." If Jesus came and lived and died, and was raised for us, then what is my hope? What am I looking at? How has God's arm acted to save? It's through Jesus. And if I give my allegiance and my faith to Jesus, and I trust him to be for me what I could never be for myself, there's this hope that emerges, that what happened to Jesus is what will happen to me: *resurrection. Resurrection.*

And I think what we're going to see here, in this paragraph, as we turn to it, is that the way that Paul thinks about the story of the world, and of what you and I have to look forward to as followers of Jesus, and how that helps us think about hope for the whole world and for the universe—it's different. *Ahentia* says: it's different than what most of us have heard before. And I don't—there's a lot of reasons why that's the case, but I think that's the case. And so let's—just prepare for all of us to be surprised. You with me?

Romans 8:18. Paul says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." So he assumes life here, for any reader, could be described as "a life of suffering." To live here on planet Earth, in the current situation that humans have been in for as far back as we can tell, is one of suffering. It's one of hardship. It's marked by really complex, difficult relationships with each other that break down. It's marked by bodies that break down.

And the ultimate—right?—"curtain of separation," that we all face and are headed towards, was death. And Paul's deep conviction is: it's because of what God did, in Jesus, that our present experience of suffering isn't even comparable to what's ahead—to the glory.

Now, depending on what you think that “future glory” is, some of us might say, “Okay, I’m supposed to believe what Paul says, but I don’t—not really feeling it right now.” If what you have in your head about “glory” is, I don’t know—it’s some form of escape from Earth, and it’s a non-physical, disembodied existence on a cloud, playing a harp forever, you know—or singing songs forever and ever, I don’t know.

Some of you might be like, “I actually rather like a meal at sunset, you know—at a wonderful restaurant, here, in Portland. I would prefer that. Are you with me? Like some of us might actually say like, “Okay, you know, life is really hard here, but the eternal “song session on a cloud” doesn’t actually sound that great in comparison. So what does he have in mind here?

And so I would really like—that’s not what Paul has in mind. He has something so much more profound in mind that is truly inspiring and compelling. Look what he says next. He says, “Creation is waiting.” By “creation,” he means the non-human, the physical, the universe—what we call the universe, or nature. “Creation is waiting in eager expectation for God’s children to be revealed.”

Now, if the hope in Paul’s mind is that we all float away to go be somewhere else, and this place gets roasted and left behind, why on earth would creation be waiting in eager expectation for that—for its own annihilation? Are you with me? What? Are you tracking here? If your idea of “the glory” is: of leaving the physical universe completely behind, what Paul is saying here makes no sense at all.

Paul—he has a different story in his head. The story he has in his head involves creation itself undergoing something that it can look forward to. It’s closely connected to the thing that followers of Jesus have to look forward to, that Paul calls “glory.” He calls it “the revelation of God’s children.” What is that?

Well, maybe he knew that we would be confused at this point. You know, the Apostle Peter, in his letter in the New Testament, he says, “You know, God bless our dear friend, Paul—you know, his letters are really difficult to understand.” And this is one of those passages. But I think if we do the hard work and we see the biblical story—holy cow—it’s really the wisdom God has given to Paul.

So he backs up, and he says, “Okay, let’s just stop. Let’s turn back to pages one through three of the Bible, which is something I’m fond of doing myself. So look what Paul says here, in verse 20. He says, “Okay, let’s stop here. Why is creation waiting for God’s children to be revealed in glory”—whatever that means? He says, “Well, listen, the creation was subjected to frustration”—it’s verse 20. “Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.”

He’s reflecting here on the story of the first pages of the Bible—that, and that’s the story of God making . . . when God makes the world, on page one of the Bible. What does

God think about this thing we call “the universe”? What does God think about it? It’s “good.” It’s “good,” how many times over? *Seven* times over. And the seventh time: *it’s very good*. God likes our world a lot, according to page one of the Bible.

And what he does, in the story, is: he appoints “images.” God appoints “images” of God’s own self to rule the world—to manage it and oversee it and take it somewhere. These images are called “humanity.” And the whole point of that is: the creator and creature—the God and humanity—exist in this intimacy, as partners who will take the world somewhere, and bring out of it the same kind of beauty that God brought out of the chaos and the darkness in the first sentences of the Bible.

And of course—how that story goes: human beings aren’t content with being managers. They want to be shareholders. They want to be “the boss.” And so humans rebel. And so what happens is that God doesn’t, like, annihilate everything. What God does is he allows the creation to fall under bad management.

It’s very similar to—maybe you have a favorite restaurant here in Portland. The story’s been told many times, right? Where—a great restaurant, here in Portland, and it changes management. And then, all of a sudden, the food isn’t as great anymore. And then the bathrooms are always dirty. And then people don’t like working there because the manager is a jerk, and it’s a toxic work environment now. And then, it’s like, the parking lot’s always dirty. Come on—how many times could we tell the story of a restaurant in Portland?

And what occurs to you when you see that happen to a restaurant is not, “Oh, let’s incinerate it. Let’s burn the place down.” Maybe, I don’t know—maybe your heart’s not broken, but you can’t get that burger anymore. I don’t know. But you get what I’m saying, though. Your thought isn’t, “Oh, it needs to be destroyed. What’s the first thought? This place needs new management. It needs new owners who will do with it what this thing is made to do—produce really amazing food.

That’s why Paul says creation was “subjected to frustration.” He’s not saying creation got angry when Adam and Eve sinned. Frustration—frustration is about: “I’m unable to do what I’m supposed to do.” It’s an inability to fulfill a purpose.

So I did some investigation before, when I was asking the musicians about the nicest piece of equipment on the stage right now. And I actually was told it’s not one of the instruments—it’s this amp right here, which doesn’t really work as great for my illustration, but maybe it can, right?

So just—so I think this Benson amp, made by our own Chris Benson, here, at Door of Hope Church—I don’t know if you can see it. It’s really beautiful. These are really nice amps. It looks like it’s dressed in a suit. It’s this beautiful cloth. And from what I hear, they’re really, they’re really remarkable amps. This amp would be subject to Eric’s

playing guitar on the Benson amp today—how's it going, Eric? Is it enjoyable to play on the—it sounds great.

So if this amp was to be gifted to me—this is not a subtle hint at all. Trust me, right?—this is not one of those ploys, right? So if this amp was to be gifted to me, it would be subject to frustration, right? Because I don't know how to play the guitar. I can hack out G, C, A, D, and E minor on an acoustic guitar. And I have an acoustic guitar in my closet. I don't own it—an electric guitar—and I don't know how to play one. But if it were gifted to me, then it would be tragic because I wouldn't—the amp would no longer be able to fulfill its purpose. Are you with me here?

The universe was subject to frustration when it came under bad management of rebellious human beings. Do you see what Paul's getting at here? So the way that Paul thinks about our world isn't that it needs to be destroyed. It's that it needs new management. It needs human beings who will actually help the creation become what it's supposed to be, as God intended it to be.

And does Paul the Apostle think that such a human exists now? Does Paul the Apostle believe that a human being exists who's truly who God made that human to be and who can truly lead humanity and creation to its true purpose and goal? Does Paul think that human exists? Yes, he does. What does Paul think the name of that human is? Jesus, the Messiah. And so this is the tension, right? He says, so here we are. Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice. It's not like the flowers and the trees were like, please give me a bad manager. You know, that's ridiculous. But it was subjected by the will of the one who subjected it. And there's different interpretations about who that one is. I think the only one that makes sense is God. Which is to say that God made our world and humans within our world to exist together. And God allowed our world, when we rebelled, to become subject to bad managers, not because God wanted it that way, but because apparently God wants the dignity and freedom of human beings, like it's real and the stakes are high. And whatever God's going to do with this universe, he's not going to do it apart from human beings and apart from creation itself. And so God subjected it in hope. In hope of what? The creation itself will be liberated. And any time an author in the Bible uses the language of slavery or freedom or redemption or liberation, the first thing you should think of in your mind is the story of the Exodus. Creation is going to be liberated from its bondage to decay. It's going to be brought into the freedom and the glory of the children of God. So whatever happened in the Exodus is what's going to happen to God's people, and it's going to happen to all of creation. Are you with me?

So Paul's vision is that the universe is going to be liberated from slavery. So are humans. But what's the creation doing now? Verse 22. What's the creation doing now? *'anakh*. Now, Paul knew Hebrew. He didn't write this letter in Hebrew. He wrote it in

Greek, and that's too many words to teach you. I just limited one word per Sunday, right? So you already—but this is the word. He's writing in Greek, but as a speaker of Hebrew, here, *'anakh*. The whole creation's groaning. Creation's in slavery. To whom? Who's creation enslaved to? Us. We've become Pharaoh. Like we're bad managers. As far back as we can tell. How have humans done with each other and with the place? You know, give us a scorecard rating. Give us a Yelp rating. Right? One and a half stars. I don't know. Two, maybe? Creation's groaning. It's in slavery to human beings who are selfish, who seek the best for me and my group at the expense of you and your group and the creation. And so creation's waiting. It's eagerly awaiting for God to do whatever he's going to do to heal and restore human beings so that the amp can truly do what it was made to do. It can play the beautiful music, or not even play. The amp doesn't play. What does it do? It amplifies. It's an amp. You get the illustration, right? The restaurant can actually produce the food that this team is capable of. That's what creation is waiting for. It's waiting for humans to get their act together so that we can actually take this world the place that God wanted it to be taken in the 1st place.

And he uses the language of the Exodus story of groaning and slavery and freedom to tell the story of Christian hope. This is very powerful. And I don't know if—my hunch is that for many of us, we've never even thought about things this way. What we're familiar with is a story that says everything's horrible. That God—the hope is to escape this place and God's gonna go to ruin or get destroyed or something, and we'll be somewhere else. And there are passages in the Bible that use images of fire and destruction to talk about God's judgment of the world as we know it. And we'll talk about those later in the series. We'll get there, trust me. If we're just looking at Romans chapter 8, what is the future hope for humanity, for a Christian, and for the universe? Liberation. Freedom. And what does liberation look like if I'm a Christian? Look at what he says: "We know that creation's groaning." He uses the slavery groaning, and then he tweaks it into labor pains groaning. Those groanings are like the pains of childbirth, right up to right now. That's a way to think about the world as you and I know it. It's groaning like the labor pains of a woman in labor. I should stop talking right now, and as many women have been through this experience, should get up and just preach the rest of the sermon, right? Because you know this groaning more than any of us ever will. Labor groaning. Why does he start talking? Why does he morph the groaning, the *'anakh* to labor pains?

I mean, I've been present for two of these experiences, right? Labor pains—something takes over. The female body just kicks into gear. And what it's going to do is push out a human being, right? One human being comes out of another human being. It's like aliens. It's crazy, right? And—but the process of that is extreme pain. And the pain, so I understand and observe, is so intense that there aren't words to articulate that pain. All that can come out is "arg" and "agh", and maybe other four-letter words that you're not

responsible for. I was not responsible for those four-letter words. So there's those words, and then there's the groaning, right? That's what he's talking about here. And that's how Paul wants us to now envision the story of the world and the story of what it means to groan as a follower of Jesus. You see that groaning, it arises from the tension. A new human life is going to be out here with us as a result of this groaning. But does that make the groaning any less severe or intense? No, it actually—it makes it almost more intense, doesn't it? And so whether it's slavery in Exodus 2 or whether it's childbirth, this is what it means to exist as a Christian in our present world. It's groaning. Are you with me here?

And who or what is groaning? Creation's groaning. The universe is groaning. And it's not the only thing groaning. He says, "Not only so. But we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we're groaning, too. The universe is groaning. And those of us who have the Spirit of Jesus in us and we're latching on to Jesus in faith, you're groaning, too, because we're awaiting our adoption as children. We're awaiting the redemption of our bodies."

Now, how are you guys doing? This is a dense paragraph of Paul the Apostle's theology. I realize that. Are you getting an inkling of how profound this is? He's giving us a story to see ourselves in. And it's very different than the Christian story that I think most people are brought up with. This is the Bible. I'm pretty sure this is the Bible, and we're reading it. And it's actually telling us something other than what many of us have heard. It's the Exodus story. It's the childbirth story. It's the story that says the Jesus that came out of the empty tomb is the future of the universe. Resurrection—the Jesus that came out of the empty tomb—did the disciples recognize that Jesus? We read a story about this. Did they always recognize him immediately? No, but then sometimes they did, didn't they? Right? And then sometimes they didn't recognize him, and it's because they had a totally wrong view of themselves and God and Jesus, and I had to undergo this transformation, and all of a sudden, so it's Jesus. Is the body that Jesus walked out of the empty tomb with, was it a physical body? Was it a ghost? It was not a ghost. It was a physical body. He had quite a few meals with his disciples, hundreds of them were told, which I assume means that he pooped out that meal too, right? It's a human body. But there are also very remarkable things about Jesus's resurrection body, weren't there? The disciples could be in a locked room, and they thought Jesus wasn't there. And then he's there. And then he's not there. That's remarkable. That's unusual. So it's physical Jesus. Is it the body of Jesus that walked around with them in Galilee? Yes. Yes, it is. Because what could Jesus show them on his physical hands and feet? The nail holes. So there's something—what Paul's asking us to believe, and I think this is what it means to be a Christian, is to believe that the future of humanity and the future of the universe is what walked out of the tomb on Easter morning. That what creation is waiting for, that what you and I are waiting for, is to become what Jesus is. He became

what we are so that we could become what he is. And what we will become is new humans. Not away somewhere else and not without bodies, but like real, physical humans. Different, very different. But humans nonetheless. And that people will look at you and be like, “Oh, Jim, Sally, like it’s you.” But then it’s not you. It’s a new you. Are you with me?

And the creation itself will be reborn. Will be freed, is the language Paul uses here, from slavery to us as our bad management, and from decay and death. And he doesn’t give us anything more than these profound images to think about it. What will that actually be like? And then a later week in the series, we’ll look in 1 Corinthians 15, and we’ll see that Paul does reflect more on what that will be like. But here’s why I want to land the plane: when Paul thinks about what it means to have hope, he uses this image of groaning. And he’s got the whole Bible memorized. He’s a Pharisee and a Bible nerd. So he’s got Psalm 31 in his head. right? Paul was no stranger to suffering. He ended up as a homeless, itinerant, imprisoned herald of Jesus. Like, he actually knows hardship in a way that most of us will never, ever know. And so Paul, here’s what it’s like to exist as a Christian. We’re post-resurrection, but pre-liberation. Groaning. We groan, and we live in a universe that groans. And somehow to be a Christian, it’s not to deny any of that. It’s not to try and just paint a rosy picture over it and be like, “Hey, turn the frown upside down. We’ll go to heaven one day.” No, it’s very different. It’s way more profound. It’s compelling.

Being Christian means staring at the cross, staring at the hard realities of what human beings do to each other, and of the horrors that we commit. And it’s not sticking our heads in the sand. I actually think it’s our obligation to be aware of it and to understand its full depth of the human condition. But to also believe that the story doesn’t end there. That the ending is a new beginning that began on Easter morning. So what does this mean for us?

You know, I don’t know where your mind and your heart have been over the last few months. When these headlines hit you, I trust that we all know what I’m trying to refer to when I talk about this groan that overtakes you. When you hear the news of another tragic event. And what those do—what those events and tragedies do—they magnify for us all of the small, minor tragedies and disappointments that we experience as we go through life, right? The death of a loved one, the death of a dream or an opportunity. Life takes a turn, and all of a sudden the door closes, and the thing that you thought and hoped would happen for you or someone you loved, it’s done. And there’s a death and a tragedy there. There’s the loss of relationships because of conflict, and the blame, things we do to each other, and why things don’t work out. Like, these are all—this is just a human condition, and we groan. But we groan like people who have hope. Amen?

And we don't have hope just because we're optimistic. We have hope because we believe, stubbornly believe in good news. And it's a good news about God's promise and character that God did something in the life and the death and in the resurrection of Jesus that gives me a hope for my body, for your body, for this world, and for the universe. So I don't know what form of groaning that you're in today, but as we come to take the bread and the cup and to worship this morning, we're coming to eat the story of Jesus becoming what we are—of his body being broken and his blood being shed for us. Paul says, we eat in hope. We eat announcing that Jesus will finish what he started on Easter, one day when he returns.

And so maybe there's a relationship in your life that's dying or feels dead. Maybe there's something inside of you, a destructive habit, that's killing you and your relationships. Maybe there's just—it's the world at large, right? It's the pressure of these tragedies that make you groan. Here's what I would encourage us to do as we come to take the bread and the cup: to bring your groans. Bring the thing that you don't even know how to talk about, because it hurts so bad. And to bring that to Jesus, and to trust that He knows it. He's experienced that very thing on the cross, and it brings us to a place of hope in resurrection and in liberation and in the rebirth of the universe. Amen.

[Musical break (42:21–42:28)]

Thanks for listening to Exploring My Strange Bible podcast. As always, I hope this is helpful for you. That it helps stimulate better thoughts that propel you towards loving God and loving your neighbor. And we'll continue on two more episodes in the series on resurrection as a way of life. So thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.

[EMSB theme fades in]