

Built On a Rock: The Heart of Christianity from Genesis to Revelation
Living the Message 2022-2023
March 2023 Study Guide for Participants and Facilitators

Life Wins: *Atonement* with Pastor Lose

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Opening Prayer

Dear God, it is hard to imagine how much you love us just as we are. As we study Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection, give us the eyes and ears of faith to see and hear and feel your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus Statement

Jesus' cross and resurrection are not simply part of some divine plan. Rather, they are what happens when God's love becomes embodied in Jesus and comes to restore our relationship with God, and what happens to us when we are confronted with God's incomprehensible love for us and for all people.

Questions (in bold)

Review the three theories of atonement first. What are the pros and cons of each? Which ones resonated with you? Which didn't? Why?

Each of the three theories of atonement answers these questions:

- a. What is the nature of God?
 - b. What is the nature of our condition?
 - c. How does God resolve that problem (condition)?
1. Christus Victor: Christ the Victor Theory (Ancient Church, revived by Gustaf Aulén)
 - a. God is love.
 - b. We are captive to the devil.
 - c. God sends Jesus to conquer death and rescue all humans from Satan's control.
 2. Substitutionary Theory (Anselm—feudal system, popular in Roman Catholicism and evangelicalism/fundamentalism today)
 - a. God (as king) is love, but even more just.
 - b. We have sinned against God's honor and so, to satisfy God's justice, must be punished.
 - c. Out of love, God sends Jesus to substitute himself for us to take our punishment.
 3. Subjective Theory (Abelard; popular in liberal traditions today)
 - a. God is LOVE.
 - b. We are trapped in sin.
 - c. God sends Jesus—the embodiment of love—to set an example for us.

Alternative: Atonement not as a plan or formula or mechanism, but as an *experience*.

Or, really, two experiences:

First: God knows us—just as we are – the experience of need/guilt (death)

Jesus comes in love to offer us forgiveness. It is very hard to admit that we are broken and in need (and we want to be in control!), so much so that we put God's son to death on a cross rather than accept God's beautiful gift of forgiveness and admit our need.

Second: God loves us—just as we are – the experience of forgiveness (resurrection)

Even when we try to get rid of, hide from, and kill God's love, Jesus' resurrection shows us that love wins, that life wins, that God's love is more powerful than death and that the God who created heaven and earth in the first place can create new life. God's love is still right in front of us, promising *never* to go away.

What appeals to you about *experiencing* atonement (vs. defining it with a theory)? What do you find challenging about it?

Why do you think people got upset when Jesus proclaimed the coming kingdom of God—and promised us forgiveness? Should we be upset about it today? Why or why not?

Why is it so important that someone who says "I love you" also knows you? What is hard about letting someone really know us?

The hope is that we don't just talk about the cross and resurrection, but that we experience it when we are encountered by the living God made manifest in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

What does this mean to you and your life?

Deeper Dive with Pastor Ruud

A way to think of atonement is to say that God won't finally be satisfied until God's mercy is full and unconditional. Death and resurrection become an event in Jesus, therefore, for our sake. One example is the event and experience for the disciple Peter found in the Gospel of John (20:1-10, 19-23; 21:15-21). Read these chapters and/or think about what Pastor Ruud said about them: **What stands out to you? How do you see Jesus' death and resurrection as an event in your life?**

Closing Prayer

Dear God, open us to the experience of your love that we may believe that you know us as we are, even when that feels frightening, so that we can trust that you love and accept us as we are and experience new life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Next Month:

The Body of Christ: *Church and the Holy Spirit* with Pastor Ruud

In-person presentation **Tuesday, April 11**, 6:30-7:30pm at the Mpls Campus – Room 207

Video emailed out on or before end of day Monday, April 10

The April session is one week later than normal due to Holy Week.

