

Dear Deacons,

Psalm 34:18, *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit,"*

Sin is not just about individual actions or moments of wrongdoing; it's a deeper condition of the human heart that separates us from God. It distorts our relationships—not just with Him, but with others and even with ourselves. This condition is universal, affecting everyone regardless of culture, background, or moral efforts. I see it in my own life, manifesting in selfishness, pride, and the struggle to prioritize God's will over my own desires.

But what gives me hope is the truth of God's infinite love and mercy. He does not leave us in this broken state. Through His grace, which He offers freely to everyone, He provides a way to be reconciled with Him. That grace was revealed most fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus bore the weight of my sins—and the sins of the world—and opened the door to forgiveness.

What amazes me about God's grace is that it not only forgives but also transforms. When I respond to His grace with faith and repentance, the Holy Spirit begins a work of renewal in me. He reshapes my desires, attitudes, and actions, gradually transforming me to reflect God's holiness. This isn't a process that happens overnight; it's a lifelong journey. But as I grow in love, humility, and obedience to Him, I find hope and restoration—both with God and with others.

I experienced a moment that tested my understanding of this grace. Being denied communion because of an accusation of living in sin deeply wounded my heart. Communion is one of the most profound expressions of God's grace—a reminder of Christ's sacrifice for all of us. To be excluded from that moment felt like being excluded from God's love itself. Yet, even in this pain, I

have been reminded of the healing and hope that grace brings.

Romans 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” I know this to be true—I am a sinner, and if sinlessness were a requirement to approach God, I would never qualify. But the beauty of grace is that Jesus welcomes sinners to His table, just as He welcomed tax collectors, the broken, and the outcasts during His ministry. Communion is not for the perfect; it’s for the imperfect—for those of us who recognize our need for the cleansing and sustaining power of Jesus Christ.

To anyone who has been excluded like I was, I would say this: God’s grace is not limited by human judgment or any one act of worship. Though being denied communion felt like rejection, I know it is not a rejection by Christ, who sees my heart and knows my struggles. His grace abounds even where sin and pain abound (**Romans 5:20**).

This experience has drawn me closer to God, seeking His comfort, truth, and strength. I know that no earthly decision can bar me from God’s love or the redemption Christ offers. Communion reminds us of grace, but His grace is so much greater than any one moment at the table. It extends to my entire life, calling me into His arms, where He heals broken hearts and transforms us from within.

As I move forward, I choose to rest in the truth that God’s love is steadfast and unshaken, even when people fail me. This experience has deepened my understanding of grace: I know that I am always invited to Christ’s table, and He will never turn me away. His grace also challenges me to forgive those who hurt me and to continue seeking Him in humility and hope.

I lean on Scripture for strength, finding encouragement in verses like **Psalms 34:18**, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit,” and **Hebrews 4:16**, “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” These words remind me that in Christ, there is always

hope for renewal and a better tomorrow.

Sincerely,

T. Van Tran

(Visitor on the front row)