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Tempter, Why Pick on Me ???

Certainly the fight for holiness of life against sin is hard and bitter. Temptation batters against the walls of our heart with all the fierceness of the Nazi drive on Stalingrad. Then it changes its tactics, and lurks almost invisibly like a sub skulking beneath a calm and tranquil sea. But always it seems we have to fight the fight alone; there is no one to help us, no one who knows about it; the battle rages in our own soul. Sometimes we feel as if no one else was ever tempted, and we feel like crying out, "Tempter, why pick on me?"

But temptation is not a private little woe of our own. All of us have to suffer it. You all know that Saint Augustine was one of the greatest Saints that ever lived. Yet for years he was bound by a habit of sin that held him like a chain, Temptation pushed him around, pulled at him, coaxed and wheedled him, unceasingly. Here is what he wrote of it himself, in his "Confessions":

"My enemy made fast this will of mine, and forged of it the chain that bound me. For through the crookedness of our desires grows lust, and by giving into lust we form a habit, and by not opposing the habit we become subject to a kind of necessity. By these links fastened within each other bitter slavery did hold me bound..."

And then I understood by my own experience what I had read:
'That the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh...'

And I was sick in mind and tormented, and turned and wound myself in my chain, until it might be wholly broken...

Toys and vanities they were, these old favorites of mine that held me down. They caught at my soul and whispered, 'Do you cast us off?' and 'Can it be that from now on we shall not be with you forever?' and 'From this moment shall this or that be forbidden you forever?' But what they meant by 'this and that' -- what did they mean, O my God? O may thy mercy guard my soul from all the filthiness and shame they meant! I heard them, yes; they did not dare attack me to my face; but softly muttered behind my back, and plucked slyly at me as I went from them, as if in hope of making me look around. And so they were with me all the time, while I delayed to cast them off; and force of habit dinned in my ears, 'Do you think you can ever live without them?'"

That's real temptation! Enough almost to drive him to despair, so that he cried out, as Saint Paul did before him: "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" But he found the answer: "The Grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord?"

The same answer is yours, and the same grace of God, through frequent Communion and humble, persevering prayer. If Saint Augustine could do it, you can do it too.