

Mark 1:11, 12—And there came a voice from heaven, saying, you are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the Holy Spirit sent him out into the wilderness.

Just like Jesus after his baptism and after his praise by his Father from heaven, we too often will find ourselves caught up in Satan's temptation traps soon after we have experienced a dramatic spiritual experience, a powerful emotional uplift or a rich revelation of his wisdom. Satan will seize every opportunity to try to catch us off guard, off balance and off cue. He knows that sometimes we tend to relax and underestimate his influence and his allure soon after we have just proven ourselves faithful. It would be easy to feel abandoned by the Spirit at times like these, when the pressures of temptation seem to sneak up on us when we should feel the most powerful; since we are still basking in that special afterglow of the presence of the Lord. If Christians feel betrayed in that way, it is because they are mistaken; not because there is any truth in fact. Instead, it simply means the Spirit is guiding us through a new time of testing, trial or temptation, while the kettle is still hot, while our spiritual fervor is high and our spiritual resolve is steel. The Spirit takes what Satan plants as the seeds of our destruction and transforms them into the buds that can mature our faith, intensify our devotion, revive our discipleship, strengthen our commitment, enlighten our understanding and fortify our courage. We must constantly be observant and alert to the covert and clandestine attempts of the evil one to sneak in under our spiritual radar and bombard our storehouses of faith. He knows full well the strategic advantage of surprise and the divisive nature of distraction.

Christians need not, at any time, feel left alone and defenseless, as easy prey for the demons of the Devil. All we need do is to use the fire of God's Truth as a furnace to convert Satan's arrows and life's daggers into useful tools for the cultivation of faith, hope and love. We need the vision to see what he uses to cause us pain and misery not as weapons of destruction but as instruments of healing and recovery. For each time we successfully resist Satan and refuse to surrender to his ploys and fall for his wicked deception, we grow more faith muscle and sharpen our spiritual vision. Not only do we become more effective at overcoming his challenges, we more clearly recognize his strategy long before he challenges us face to face. In other words, we can see him coming. The Spirit dwelling within the child of God is not intimidated nor threatened by neither demon nor Devil. God's Spirit supplies us, empowers us, equips us, protects us and guides us. Satan's bark always has been more threatening than his bite. Death is his only trump card and Christ has already ached that card. We have at our disposal, the power of resurrection, the freedom of renewal, the contentment of acceptance; the presence of His Spirit in our lives. There is no grip of sin from which the Spirit cannot release us.