CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE GOD OF THE WORLD

In this first sermon of chapter 13, Isaac Foster refers directly to Satan 49 times. By the end of this sermon, there would have been very little doubt in the minds of the congregation about Foster’s theme for that day. Did any of them know that this sermon was merely an introduction to a series that would last through November? In this series, Foster addresses virtually every topic explored in this book. The themes of conversion, justification, redemption, sanctification, predestination, the Devil, and the natural man among others. In this series, these themes are subjected to the scrutiny of a maturing preacher, who by this time has clearly found his voice.

As with chapter 6, the problems within the church are the subject of the text, and Foster’s overt references to the Devil were very likely intended to arouse Hartford’s awareness of its own moral laxity. Foster’s opening sermon of September 12 is an exhortation to be wary of the power of Satan and his temptations, but it is also about humankind’s weapon against Satan, which of course is Jesus Christ. The Devil was clearly a pervasive presence in the lives of Foster’s congregation.¹

(Sunday) September 12, 1680: Mr. Foster. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

“There hathe no tentation taken you, but suche as apperteineth to man: and God is faithful, which wil not suffer you to be tempted above that you be able, but wil even give the yssue with the tentation, that ye may be able to beare it.”² Doctrine: that temptations are comon to man it is the portion man in this life to be tempted.

¹ In his book Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England, Emory Elliott discusses the figure of Satan in the lives of New England’s Puritans, and based on Isaac Foster’s sermon series from Corinthians, Elliott’s assessment seems quite accurate. “During the 1660’s and 1670’s, when ministers had placed the blame for all of New England’s troubles upon the people themselves, the figure of Satan had occupied a secondary position to the rising generation as the cause of evils in the colony. With the shift in the message of the sermon toward assurance of the young in the 1680’s, Satan reemerged as the principal foe.” Emory Elliott, Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975), 198.

Use 1. Inform: see hence the happyness of the saints in heaven. They are out of Saytn’s reach. 2 Think not strang to meat with temptations. They are comon to men. No Temptation hath taken you but what is common to man. 3 Hence learn that the best of men have continuall need of grace in that they must be Tempted. They must withstand Saytn and therefor they stand in need of speciall grace and strength from here to withstand the powers of hell. (6 Ephesians 13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God the whole stock of graces, that the spirit of God is the armor by which we stand against Sayten. We stand in need of grace and Especially of fayth by which we must withstand the fyry darts of the Devill. We need grace to strengthen agaynst temptation more than [to] [be] freed from it. We need grace 1 to watch agaynst the temptations of Saytn. (25 Matthew 25) They all slumbered and [slept]. It is our duty to be vigilant and watchfull and great is our anger if it be not so and we want grace for this. 2 We do need grace to discover Saytn’s Temptations that we be [not] ignorant of his devices. We need grace to find [o ] [ ] the turnings and windings of this cuning serpant. We need special grace to resist and overcome Saytn so that we be not overcome by him, that we be not taken by his wiles and devices.4 God hath promised if we doe resist [ ] Tempter and he shall flee from us. [ ] Saytn is not invincible he hath been and [n ] be overcome. Saytn was conquered by the blood of Jesus. (12 Revelations 10.11 verse) The [lambe]: This great Goliah may be conquered by them that doe [ oe] out against them in the name of God. It is true Saytn did [ ] never shall totally overcome any one saint. He that is be [ ] of God God keepeth him that Saytn doth not touch them [ s] to have them. No they are gainers by his Temptations. He doth not suffer them to be drawn into sin. That unpardonable sin. It is [ ] true they canot apose him. (1 Samuel 28:15) 4 They need grace [ so] for to get the [good] of Temptation. God hath promised all shall [worke] for [good] for those that fear him if all their afflictions Temptations and then surely we want grace to help that it may be soe. Those Temptations they sift the godly. They are [fined] and made more pure and holy, thereby God suffers his people to be afflicted for this very end that grace may be more conspicuous [ ] them. 5 We need grace that we may Honor God under Temptation.

3 (25 Matthew 5) King James, p. 36.
4 In other words, we need to be regenerated, and godly, a visible saint.