

they can be forgiven. The judgment and the council mentioned in the last verses, were different courts of justice where sentences of greater or less severity were passed upon offenders. "Raca" is a Hebrew word, which means an empty, worthless, contemptible person. "Hell fire" does not mean the place of eternal punishment, but a valley in which idolators used to burn their children as sacrifices to their false gods. It was afterwards considered as the vilest and most polluted of all places, from the cruelties and crimes which had been committed there, and at length became a place of execution for criminals; in consequence of its being in so many ways detestable, it came to be known by the same name as the place of final punishment for sinners.*—The instruction to be derived from these verses is very plain. When we indulge in excessive and causeless anger, and a desire to be revenged, we are not only responsible for the evil passions we are cherishing, but for their possible and probable consequences: for Cain would never have been tempted to murder his brother, if he had not first allowed the evil spirit of malice, hatred, and envy, to get possession of his heart, and urge him on to that dreadful crime. We also learn that all offensive and provoking language which may awaken angry feelings in the hearts of others, is to be avoided, and that those who allow themselves to make use of it, are in danger of falling into such darker and deeper offences as will expose them to temporal as well as to eternal punishment.

We must now conclude your lesson for to-day, and we will do it in the words of Solomon. Turn to the twenty-ninth chapter of Proverbs, Hannah, and read the twentieth verse, and you will see what was the opinion of the wisest of men on the subject of angry and thoughtless words, though many people think there is very little harm in any thing they can say, and forget all the evils to which their intemperate use of their tongue may lead.

Hannah.—"Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

* Bishop of Chester.