

I. BE HUMBLE. 1. In that hour (R. V.)—namely, when Jesus was conversing with Peter about the tribute money. Who then is the greatest (R. V.)—The question is suggested by the incident of the tribute money, when Jesus spoke as if the kingdom were already set up, and arises out of a discussion on the subject among the disciples (Mark 9: 33, 34). Comparing the other accounts, we find that Jesus knew their thoughts (Luke 9: 47), and began the conversation in order to call out this one. Their unseemly rivalry broke out again at the Last Supper (Luke 22: 24-26). **The kingdom of heaven**—Who ever heard of royalty without its "table of precedence," setting forth in due order the dignitaries of the realm?

2. A little child—"a little boy." Tradition says that he was afterwards the great church father, Ignatius. Had Jesus made Peter "primate" when he said "upon this rock will I build my church," he would not have given such an answer as follows. He would have said, "Peter, of course, did I not give him the keys?" It must be clear that no such rank was ever conferred as is claimed by Romanists for this apostle. The whole spirit of our Saviour's teaching is opposed to such unworthy ambition as the disciples displayed. Mark says that he took the child in his arms. Notice how often Mark mentions the hand-grasp of Jesus (1: 41; 5: 41; 8: 23; 9: 27; 10: 16).

3. Converted—(R. V.) "except ye turn." They were pursuing an ambitious course, they must turn right round and display an opposite spirit. As little children—gentle, teachable, humble, loving, etc., the qualities characteristic of childhood. Without these there can be no question of greater or less; we cannot enter the kingdom at all. (1 Cor. 14: 20; 1 Pet. 2: 2.) The tense of the verbs "be converted, etc.," shows that our Saviour did not insinuate that the disciples had not undergone the moral change indicated. He is laying down a general law of the kingdom. Such feelings as they had exhibited were a violation of it, and called for disapproval on his part and reformation on theirs.

4. Humble himself—"The real greatness of the child consists in its perfect contentment with its littleness and dependence." (Lange.) He who is of most service to others, and is least ambitious for himself, is greatest in the kingdom of Him "who emptied himself," and "took upon himself the form of a servant." (Matt. 20: 27; 23: 17; Mark 9: 35.)

5. One such little child—We must understand this both literally and figuratively. We should take an affectionate interest in the young because Jesus loved them, and was himself a child. The childlike are to be esteemed because they are like Him. "One such," means "a single one," the numeral is emphatic. "So very precious are they. (Meyer.) In my name—"For my sake," because he knows that I would wish him to do so, or because such belong to me (see Mark 6: 41), both

ideas are combined. **Receive me**—What a precious word for Sabbath School teachers. Be patient and gentle then with the dull and the troublesome ones. Carry them on your hearts all the time. You are receiving them for Jesus' sake. You are as Christ to them. "The expression 'in my name,' seems to have suggested to John a sudden question, which broke the thread of Christ's discourse (Mark 9: 38-41). They had seen, he said, a man who was casting out devils in Christ's name; but, since the man was not one of them, they had forbidden him. Had they done right?" (Far- rar.) "Was it right for us to forbid one to cast out devils in thy name, when the receiving of even a little child in thy name is the same as receiving thee?" (Owen.) His answer was as if he had said "We must not narrow the cause of God to our own party, but rejoice in goodness wherever it appears. If we are right, it is all coming our way." (Ker.) The narrative in Matthew omits this digression, and gives, in verse 6, the continuation of Christ's discourse.

II. HATE SIN. 6. Shall offend—(R. V.) "cause to stumble." This does not mean "wounding the feelings," but tempting to sin. We may not be responsible if others misunderstand us, and it may sometimes be impossible to avoid giving pain; but we are guilty if any are misled by our words or example, as when a father teaches his son to drink or swear, or a young man leads another into Sabbath-breaking and evil courses. The word means putting a stone in the way for another to trip over. It were better for him—(R. V.) "it is profitable for him," compared with the punishment which he will receive from God. A suggestion of an awful and irremediable doom. **A millstone**—A large millstone turned, as the word signifies, by an ass. Smaller stones, for grinding or bruising grain, were turned by hand (Matt. 24: 41). Better die a thousand deaths than be the cause of the loss of a soul. Death by drowning was not a Jewish method of punishment, but it was practised by the Greeks, Romans, Syrians and Phœnicians. It was considered as degrading as crucifixion.

7. Woe . . . offences—Bad example and temptations to evil are the cause of most of the misery and sorrow of the world. It must needs be—"This necessity has its foundation in the morally abnormal condition of mankind." (Meyer.) "Such is the corruption of human nature, such the depravity of man, that there will be always some attempting to make others sin. Such, alas, is the strength of our native depravity, and the force of passion, that our besetting sins will lead us astray." (Barnes.) (1 Cor. 11: 19; Rom. 14: 13.) **Offences** (R. V.) "occasions of stumbling." We cannot live in a sinful world without meeting many temptations, but God will punish those who lead others into sin. That man—The singular number is used in order to give emphasis to the general conception. Some see here a reference to Judas