

THE S. S. LESSON

INTERNATIONAL LESSON,
NOV. 23.

Lesson IX. Paul on Self-denial.
(World's Temperance Lesson.)

Rom. 14. 21.

Verse 10. Why . . . judge, . . . why . . . set at naught thy brother? Two classes mentioned in verse 3. The weak are not to be harsh in their judgment of the strong, nor are the strong to despise the scruples of the weak. All are brethren, with a claim on one another's affection and forbearance.

We shall all stand—including Paul, those that judge, and those that set at naught. Human judgments have no significance in view of the final sentence of God. The Authorized Version has "Christ." Paul passed naturally from "God." to "Christ." Compare Rom. 2. 16.

11. It is written—Isa. 45. 23. Offered as proof of a universal judgment.

Every knee signifies visible worship, and every tongue, audible.

Confess to God—Make acknowledgment of his might and goodness. This voluntary and universal submission is Paul's idea of the consummation of the ages.

12. Each one of us . . . of himself—Emphatic inference from the prophet's words, that the judgment will be not merely universal but solitary. With the responsibility of that hour in view, we should concern ourselves, not with the weaknesses and faults of our brethren, but with the stern work of making possible a good account of ourselves in that day.

13-21. In all conduct we must think, not merely whether what we do is in itself right, but whether it will have a baneful effect upon others. By the law of love we are bound to desist from any act that is likely to injure another brother.

13. Judge ye this rather—"Make no decision about your brother's character, but make this decision about your own future conduct." Paul teaches consistently that the abuse of Christian liberty may prove to another a stumbling-block, or an occasion of falling when this brother's way is, for him, a plain, unobstructed path to heaven.

14. Know . . . am persuaded—A solemn conviction, growing out of his union with Jesus, who, as Lord of the conscience, has sole authority to pronounce judgment (verse 9).

Nothing is unclean of itself—Apart from conscience and a man's relation to society, there are no distinctions of food. Among the Jews, ceremonial law forbade the eating of things sacrificed to idols.

The revelation to Peter, that God's provisions are not common (Acts 10. 15), Paul here reaffirms. The exception to this is, of course, that a thing becomes unclean to the man whose conscience forbids him to touch it. Because a man's view of right and wrong is false is not a reason why he should violate it. Even a mistaken conscience has authority.

15. For if—Introducing a reason for Paul's exception to a universal rule.

Because of meat thy brother is grieved—It is inconsistent with true love for a strong man of faith to insist upon his rights when his course harms his weaker brother.

Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died—Note the strong contrast. Is it not the part of the sturdy Christian to pay at least the small price of refraining from a cherished habit, if by so doing he may save from ruin one for whom Christ paid so dearly?

Destroy—Violation of the law of love carries with it possibilities of endless ruin to the one we seem merely to grieve.

16. Your good—Your faith, with its liberty, may be blasphemed (literal meaning of evil spoken of) by men who see you persist in what is your unquestioned right, but which leads to the destruction of another, for "they will think that what you value most in the gospel is that it breaks down the restrictions of Judaism and allows men to eat anything."

17. Kingdom of God—Connecting Paul's teaching with Christ's. Notice the striking contrast of this verse with Matt. 6. 31-33. If a man insists upon eating and drinking certain things, in themselves not harmful, but in spite of another's scruples, it looks as if he thought them the all-important things of the kingdom. The great things of the

CAUSE AND CURE OF NEURALGIA

Modern Methods Dispose of the
Cause Instead of Treating the
Symptoms.

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kingdom are righteousness in one's relations and dealings with others, peace, through preserving harmony between the weak and strong, and the joy of Christian brotherhood which grows out of the common indwelling Holy Spirit.

18. Herein—In the spiritual graces of righteousness, peace, joy. Serveth Christ—Is in a slave's bondage to Christ's law of love, and not to his own animal appetites.

Well-pleasing to God—And therefore a fit member of his kingdom. Approved of men—Your conduct will be well, instead of evil, spoken of.

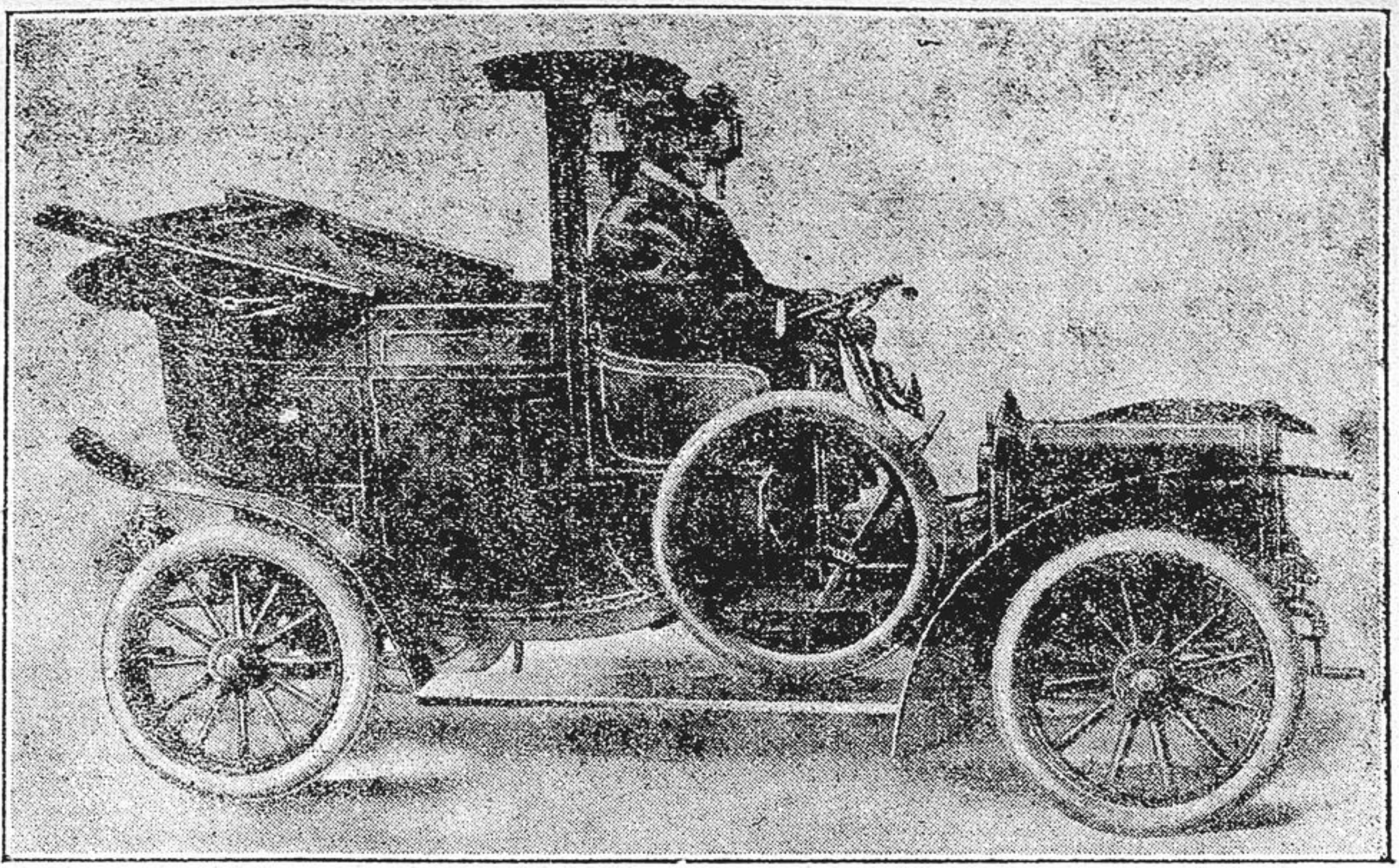
19. Things which make for peace—Not judging and slighting one another, but making allowance for one another's rights and scruples.

Edify—Literally, build up. In the erection of a building it is important that the different parts should harmonize.

20. Overthrow not—Do not pull down the building erected at such cost. Having stated his broad principles, Paul returns to the subject of questionable foods, repeating that, while food may be clean, it is sinful to eat it if it makes another fall.

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