INTRODUCTION:
A. Bro. Joe R. Barnett has written an excellent tract entitled “Keep Your Tongue” wherein he begins by paraphrasing a story by L. L. Wightman. I would like to share it with you.

George Brown heard the clatter of a wheelbarrow in front of his house. He stepped to the window, wondering who it could be. It was Manley Strong with his wheelbarrow loaded with all manner of garbage. He turned into the yard and approached the front door. His collection of rotten apples, tin cans, ashes, and what not, contrasted strongly with the neat lawn and beautiful flower beds.

“Good morning, Mr. Brown. I’ve brought you a load of garbage, and I’m wondering where you wish to have it dumped.” George Brown’s eyes opened widely with surprise. “Where do I wish that stuff? Have you gone crazy? Do you see any signs telling you to dump garbage here?”

Manley pointed to a beautiful flower bed. “There is room for it there,” he suggested. “I believe that’s a good place to dump it.” George Brown gasped. “You dump that stuff here and see what happens,” he threatened.

“Would you prefer it in the middle of the lawn?” Manley asked. “Say, what’s the meaning of this?” the irate owner asked. The best thing you can do is to get that stuff out of here.

Manley nodded. “I really believe this stuff should be taken to the garbage dump,” he agreed, “but I thought if you could dump your garbage where you pleased, I certainly should have the same privilege.”

“What do you mean” George Brown asked.

“Let me refresh your memory. You’ll understand what I mean. Do you remember talking yesterday afternoon with a group of boys? Before you left them you dumped a foul story on them, and also some profane language. Two of those boys are in my Sunday School class. I spend time and effort to keep their lives pure and clean, and they are as much a source of pride to me as your beautiful lawn and flower beds are to you. Yet you dumped your foul garbage on the minds of those boys. Having done so, you laughed and went away, leaving the garbage there to breed evil thoughts and possibly evil deed. You do not wish your flowers buried beneath a pile of garbage; neither do I wish the purity of those boys spoiled by your offensive language. You could remove this stuff from your lawn, but it is more difficult to remove evil thoughts which have been sown in the mind.”
B. This story illustrates a good point. Each of us are examples to others, and we need to exercise great care in our speech, and never stoop to “dump the garage of speech” on them.

C. The Bible reveals that God places a strong emphasis on the sins of speech.
   1. Two of the Ten Commandments refer to sins of the tongue.
      a. (3rd) “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain…”
         *Exodus 20:7*
      b. (9th) You shall not bear false witness…” *Exodus 20:16*
   2. Of the seven things God hates, three have to do with the tongue.
      *Proverbs 6:6-19*
      a. A lying tongue.
      b. A false witness that bears lies.
      c. And he who sows discord among brethren.
   3. One of Christ’s most arresting warnings was: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” *Matthew 12:36-37*

D. Words reveal the man.
   1. Accent often betrays one’s geographical origin.
   2. Peter Galilean accent gave him away during the Jewish set of trials of Jesus. “a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.” *Matthew 26:73*
   3. Just as accent indicates one’s geographical origin, so speech betrays the condition of one’s heart.
   4. By examining the tongue of a patient, the physician diagnoses the diseases of the body . . . . . . and by examination of the tongue, the Lord gives His diagnosis of the diseases of the spirit.
   5. The Great Physician said. “. . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” *Matthew 12:34*

**WE NEED TO THINK BEFORE WE SPEAK**

A. James wrote in *James 1:19* – “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”
   1. One should always think twice before he speaks once.
   2. Someone wrote: A wise old owl lived in an oak.
      The more he saw the less he spoke.
      The less he spoke the more he heard;
      Why can’t we all be like that bird?”
   3. We need to be careful to taste our words before we let them pass our teeth.
4. One observing person said, “Many things are opened by mistake, but none so frequent as one’s mouth.”

B. In his wisdom, Solomon wrote:
1. “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.” Proverbs 10:19
2. “He who has knowledge spares his words . . .” Proverbs 17:27
3. “. . . A fool's voice is known by his many words.” Ecclesiastes 5:3

LET US OBSERVE A LESSON FROM A THERMOMETER AND A THERMOSTAT
A. A thermometer RECORDS the temperature . . . a thermostat CONTROLS the temperature.
1. The tongue combines both the thermometer and the thermostat in the same device.
2. James 3:2-4 – “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.
   Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.”

B. The tongue as a THERMOMETER.
1. Just as the thermometer declares the temperature level, so one’s conversation reveals the level of his spirituality.
2. Speech exposes the condition of the heart.
   a. Swearing discloses a profane heart.
   b. Impure stories disclose a filthy heart.
   d. Murmuring discloses a thankless heart.
   e. Criticism discloses a jealous heart.

C. The tongue as a THERMOSTAT.
1. The thermometer registers temperature, but in no way regulates it. The thermostat governs the temperature. The tongue not only measures moral condition, but is also a determining instrument.
2. In James 3:3-4, the tongue is spoken of using the figures of a bit in a horses mouth and the rudder on a ship.
   a. A bit determines the course of a horse, making him turn to the left or the right . . . letting him run fast or jolting him to a stop.
   b. A rudder guides the ship’s course, turning it in any desired direction.
   c. Similarly, proper use of the tongue can guide a person safely through hazardous circumstances.
3. As a thermostat, the tongue can lower the temperature of:
TONGUE: “Sins of the Tongue”

a. Pride
b. Temper
c. Jealousy
d. Spite
e. And others sins of the tongue, and make one more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

SEVEN SINS OF THE TONGUE. Sins of the tongue can be numerous. We shall consider seven of the most common.

A. SWEARING

1. God warned the people of Israel in Exodus 20:7 – “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

2. God’s displeasure with cursing was made plain by His instructions to Moses as commanded in these two passages:
   a. Leviticus 24:14 – “Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.”
   b. Leviticus 26:16 – “And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death.”

3. Regardless of what you might think, profanity is not a mark of toughness. Rather, it is a mark of weakness and stupidity. Those who profane God’s name indicate their mental poverty and lack of self-control.

4. General George Washington felt that God’s favor would not be on his troops if swearing was practiced. We cannot but help be impressed with an entry he wrote in his orderly book on August 3, 1776. “I am sorry to be informed that the foolish and wicked practice of profane swearing, a vice heretofore little known in the American army, is growing into fashion. I hope that the officers will, by example and influence, endeavor to check it; and that both they and the men will reflect, that we have little hope of the blessing of heaven on our arms, if we insult Him by out impiety and folly. Added to this is a vice so mean and low . . . that every man of sense and character detests and despises it.”

5. Swearing is neither sensible or worthwhile. The person who swears . . . . . .
   a. Lays aside his character.
   b. Inflicts pain on those close to him.
   c. Violates the Scriptures.
   d. And loses his soul.

6. In every life there are some hours of crisis when there is a need to call
upon God for help and strength.

a. Proverbs 18:10 – “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.”

b. However, a person who has cursed and profaned the name of the Lord will find it difficult to ask for His help.

7. A little tract entitled, “Ten Reasons Why I Swear,” shows the foolishness of the habit. The ten stated reasons are:

a. (1) It pleases mother so much.
b. (2) It is a fine mark of manliness.
c. (3) It proves I have self-control.
d. (4) It indicates how clearly my mind operates.
e. (5) It makes my conversation so pleasing to everybody.
f. (6) It leaves no doubt in anyone’s mind as to my good breeding.
g. (7) It impresses people that I have more than an ordinary education.
h. (8) It is an unmistakable sign of culture and refinement.
i. (9) It makes a very desirable personality among women and children and respectable society.
j. (10). It is my way of honoring God, who said, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain . . .”

8. Listen to what God’s word says about the tongue. James 3:9-12 – “With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”

a. How mysterious it would be to get fresh water and salt water or even iron water from the same stream.
b. It is as puzzling for blessing and cursing to come from the same mouth.
c. How strange for the tongue to speak praise one moment and spew poisonous words of profanity the next.

B. GOSSIPING & TALEBEARING


2. The gossiper is a “reputation assassin.” Jean Blewett wrote in a poem:

“The man who with the breath lent him by heaven speaks words that soil the whiteness of a life.
Is but a murderer, for death is given,
As surely by the tongue as by the knife.”
3. An unknown poet has pointed out that one’s thoughts should pass three gates of gold before they are spoken:

- If you are tempted to reveal
- A tale to you someone has told
- About another, make it pass
- Before you speak, three gates of gold.

These narrow gates: First, “Is it true?”
Then, Is it needful?” In your mind
Give truthful answer. And the next
Is last and narrowest, “Is it kind?”

And if to reach your lips at last
It passes through these gateways three
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear
What the result of speech may be.

4. **IS IT TRUE?** No one has the right to relate any story about another unless he is absolutely certain that it is true.
   a. The Lord commanded in Exodus 20:16 – “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
   b. David asked in Psalm 15:1 - “Who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?” Two verses later he gave this answer: “He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart.”
   d. Many will pass on a story about another without taking time to verify the accuracy of it. No one should say anything about others that they would be unwilling to write out and sign.
   e. Most people have the tendency to add a little to a story before passing it on. Someone has well said, “I like the parrot. It is the only creature gifted to repeat just what it hears without trying to make a good story out of it.”
   f. The rumor was spread that when a certain minister’s wife was attending a public meeting, her husband went there in a rage, violently dragged her from the hall, and compelled her to go home. The minister, who was in town, allowed the tale to circulate for a time. Then, one Sunday morning, he made this statement to the congregation. In the first place, I never attempted to influence my wife in her choice of a meeting. In the second place, my wife did not attend the meeting in question. In the third place, I did not attend the meeting myself. And finally, I am not even married.”

5. **IS IT KIND?** Everything that is true may not be kind.
6. **IS IT NEEDFUL?** One’s remarks about others should serve a purpose.
   a. Even some things about others which are true are better left unsaid.
   c. The Bible says in *Proverbs 17:9* – “He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.”
   d. Just as picking a flower to pieces, petal by petal, will destroy its beauty, so the morbid dissection of another’s character, by whispering and gossip, can shatter his reputation and destroy his happiness.
   e. Here is a good suggestion to follow:
      
      If you your lips would keep from slips,
      Five things observe with care;
      Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,
      And how, and when, and where.
   
   f. A teenager went to an elderly man for advice. He had been guilty of spreading a tale about another, and had now discovered that it was untrue. He wanted to know how he could repair the damage. The elderly man gave him these instructions: First, he was to lay a fluffy chicken feather at the door of each house in the little community; then he was to return for further instructions. Upon his return the elderly gentleman commanded, “Now, go and retrieve each feather.” The boy objected that by now the wind would have blown the feathers in every direction. It would be impossible to recover them. His counselor nodded in agreement, and said, “So it is with your words, my son. Like the feathers which the wind scattered, they have blown in many directions, and you can never recall them.

**C. CRITICISM**

1. A lecturer once held up before an audience a large white handkerchief marred by one small blot. “What do you see” he asked. “A blot” was the almost unanimous reply. Practically no one noticed the white background.
   a. How like human nature. Most are quick to see the faults in others, but overlook their good qualities.
   b. Jesus warned, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” *Matthew 7:1*
   c. The Lord was not condemning the proper kind of judgment, for he said in *John 7:24* – “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”
   d. Jesus was prohibiting faultfinding and criticism where there is no law (no basis).
   e. One lady criticized her neighbor for hanging out dirty clothes on the clothes line, only to find that the dirty streaks were not on her neighbor’s wash at all, but on her own window.
f. Someone has penned these lines:

“One great truth in life I’ve found,
While journeying to the West;
The only folks we really wound
Are those we love the best.

We flatter those we scarcely know.
We please the fleeting guest,
And deal full many a thoughtless blow.
To those we love the best.”

g. James 4:11-12 – “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”

D. CONTENTIOUS WORDS

1. Contention is sometimes unavoidable. But usually it can be averted by proper control of the tongue. Proverbs 15:1 – “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.”

2. When a bee or a wasp buzzes around your head, if you don’t bother it, it will probably leave you alone. But try to swat it and you are likely to get stung.

3. There are some remarks which will invariably stir up a hornet’s nest.
   a. “I wouldn’t let him get away with that.”
   b. “She’s just jealous, that’s all.”
   c. “She thinks she’s somebody now, but I remember when . . .”
   d. “Don’t’ be mad if I tell you this, but . . .”
   e. “I think you should know what she said about you . . .”

4. We need to learn the art of remaining calm when a storm of contention is brewing. Proverbs 16:32 – “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city”

5. Soft words will stop arguments as well as prevent arguments.
   a. Winners of arguments still lose. People are left feeling . . . . . .
      1. Inferior
      2. Mad
      3. Hurt
      4. Disappointed
      5. Vengeful
      6. Betrayed
      7. Etc.
b. Win an argument and lose a friend.
c. Win an argument and lose a soul.
d. Win an argument and lose a Savior.

E. LYING
1. Lying ranks high among the vices of human beings. Many feel there is nothing serious about lying . . . unless one gets caught. God’s Word says:
   a. Proverbs 12:22 – “Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight.”
2. If a person always speaks the truth he need not worry about remembering what he has said because the truth will always be the same. On the other hand, those who tell lies have to have exceptionally good memories.
3. One lie leads to another: Boy in counseling – a compulsive liar – “Do not know what is true or not any more.” (Studying to be a preacher)
4. “Always tell the truth, even if it chokes you.”
5. Lying, unless repented of and forgiven, will keep a person out of Heaven. The Bible warns in Revelation 21:27 – “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

F. JESTING & IDLE WORDS
1. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36 – “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.”
2. In Ephesians 5 Paul lists some things that he says, “Let it not be named once among you as becometh saints.” In verse 4 he concludes “jesting” in that list.
   a. Some have concluded from these passages that all joking is wrong and that humor must be completely shunned by Christians.
   b. However, the word “idle” literally means “free from work, not working, inactive.”
   c. A idle word is one which isn’t working or producing. It is a weed in the garden of speech.
3. Humor has its rightful place. Proverbs 17:22 – “A merry heart does good, like medicine . . .”
4. However, there are some kinds of jesting that are wrong. For instance:
   a. It is sinful to make fun of, or take advantage of, a person’s handicap.
      The law said in Leviticus 19:14 – “You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD.”
   b. It is also wrong to jest at another’s appearance or misfortune. God said
in Proverbs 17:5 — “He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.”

G. EUPHEMISMS

1. Jehovah has forever regarded, with great displeasure, and disposition on the part of man to use His name in flippant, frivolous and profane fashion.
   a. The first commandment of the dialogue was designed to protect the sanctity of God’s being. Exodus 20:3 — “You shall have no other gods before Me.”
   b. The second forbade man to approach Him through some human device. Exodus 20:4 — “You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”
   c. The third commanded, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” Exodus 20:7 This was formulated to guarantee respect and reverence for God’s name.
   d. Listening friends, these are repeated in Deuteronomy 5:7-11.

2. One is profane who uses sacred things in an irreverent and a blasphemous manner.
   a. The word “vain” in the third of the Ten Commandments, is translated from a word which means in a light, flippant, and contemptuous fashion.
   b. It is of serious consequence that many members of the church have allowed to creep into their phraseology words and phrases, the use of which amounts to profanity.
   c. Christ . . . Jesus . . . Jerusalem . . . Heaven . . . Hell . . . Hades, as INTERJECTIONS (which according to Webster is defined as “An ejaculatory word or form of speech usually thrown in without grammatical connection) and for emphasis, will nevertheless use EUPHEMISMS (the substitution of a word or phrase less offensive or objectionable), the deviation of which goes back to one of the foregoing forms.
   d. If those in the church who use these euphemisms were aware of the origin of many of these common by-words, they would be shocked.

4. Some common euphemisms.

a. GEE-WHIZ
   1. “Gee” is an euphemism contraction of the name “Jesus.” It is a slang and has no proper use in our language.
   2. Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary says that it is “A minced form of Jesus, used in mild oaths.”
3. “Whiz” is a slang word for anything excellent, “a corker, sometimes applied to a clever person or thing of excellence. Something or someone of exceptional ability or quality.

4. The words “Gee-Whiz” are, therefore an oath in which Jesus and something extraordinary or unusual or joined.

b. **GOSH**

1. “Gosh” is an interjection used euphemistically for God.
2. It is an exclamatory slang expression indicating surprise.
3. The Century Dictionary says that it is “A minced form of God: often used interjectionally as a mild oath.”
4. Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary says that it is “a softened form of God, used as a mild oath.”
5. It is occasionally used in hyphenated fashion such as “Gosh-awful,” which means, literally, “God-awful.” In this form it is often used as an adjective and euphemistically.

c. **GAD, EGAD,** etc.

1. These terms are also interjections and are used euphemistically for the word “God” in mild oaths.
2. They indicate surprise . . . disgust . . . dismay . . . and similar emotions, and are ejaculatory in character.
3. They are often joined with other terms of further emphasis, such as:
   a. “Gee Whilikins”
   b. “Gee Whilikers” (Dennis, the Menace TV show)
   c. “Gee Whiskers”
4. Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary says, “A softened form of the word God as used in mild oaths of which the second element is often a corruption or made up words.

d. **GOLLY**

1. This word, of extremely common use, is described by the New World Dictionary as “an exclamation of surprise, an euphemism for God.”
2. It is often used in conjunction with the word “by” as in “By golly!” Which is to say “By God!”
3. Sometimes it is used as a noun and at other times as an interjection for the word “God.”
4. Jim Nabor’s character, Gomer Pyle, frequently used this word on his TV program.
e. **GOOD GRACIOUS! GOOD GRIEF! MY GOODNESS!, etc.**
   1. These are all mild oaths where the word **good** or **goodness** is used for God according to Webster’s New World Dictionary.
   2. There are many forms of this usage such as:
      a. “Goodness sake!”
      b. “Goodness knows!”
      c. “Thank goodness!”
   3. All of these are ejaculatory and exclamatory expressions in reference to the goodness of God, but used slangly and for emphasis.
   4. One who thus speaks calls for God to witness to the statement which the oath is associated.
   5. In the expression, “Goodness knows who it could have been” means God only knows and I do not.
   6. In the expression, “Goodness knows it wasn’t me” means God knows it and could affirm my statement.

f. **HEAVENS! GOOD HEAVENS! FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE!**
   1. These are all statements of exclamatory character, in which the heavens are called to witness to the truth of the statement, or to support the affirmation.
   2. All such expressions when used a by-words, as slang, and in a flippant, frivolous fashion, violate our Lord’s injunction set forth in the Sermon on the Mount and recorded in Matthew 5:34-35 – “But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.”

5. We are not suppose that it is wrong to use the various names of God in our conversation when such usage is reverent, respectful, and sober (Serious).
   a. We have, indeed numerous instances of such usage in the Scriptures.
      1. “God forbid.”
      2. “If God wills.”
      3. “The Lord grant mercy”
      4. Etc.
   b. These statements may used in right ways . . . not in wrong ways.

6. The Jews regarded the name of Jehovah as ineffable and to this day refuse to pronounce it in Hebrew.

7. It is the profane use of sacred things and names against which the Bible inveighs, all and such expressions as we have mentioned in this consideration of euphemisms and should be rigidly excluded from our vocabularies.
CONCLUSION:

A. The Bible emphasizes the fact that NOT ALL speech is sinful.
B. The writer of Proverbs makes some rather striking statements to drive home the blessings of PROPER speech.
   1. Proverbs 10:20 – “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little.”
   2. Proverbs 16:24 – “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.
   3. Proverbs 25:11 – “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver.”
C. The tongue is also capable of great destruction. The Lord’s Word says, in speaking of the tongue, “Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” James 3:5
   1. A small fire can start a fire that quickly rages out of control, destroying life, property, and resources.
   2. Likewise, the tongue, though small, can ignite the dry timber of suspicion and quickly spread flames which . . .
      a. Wreck reputations.
      b. Destroy friendships.
      c. Break hearts.
D. Solomon advises in Ecclesiastes 5:6 – “Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin . . .”
E. In the day of judgment we will face the record of our words. Thus, we need to pray:
   1. Psalm 141:3 – “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.”
   2. Psalm 19:14 – “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer”
F. Remember the words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 12:36-37 – “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.
   For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation
TONGUE: “Sins of the Tongue”