

# Why Sign the Pledge?

by F.B. Meyer

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*Signing the pledge is a powerful way to protest against strong drink, benefit your health, save your time, save your purse, save you from temptation, make a definite starting point in your history, make a strong obligation, give a sufficient answer to those who tempt you to drink, keep it from becoming the badge of a reclaimed drunkard, and make it easier for others to do the same.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 20:1, Matthew 5:16, Romans 14:21, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 5:18, Philipians 4:13, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 1 John 3:8

**Topics:** "Abstinence", "Community Support"

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## Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the growing Christian opposition to strong drink and the importance of signing the Pledge of Total Abstinence as a means of protest against the devastation caused by alcohol. He encourages believers to rely on God, care for others, and recognize the personal and communal benefits of abstaining from alcohol. Meyer argues that signing the pledge not only strengthens one's resolve but also serves as a powerful example to others, fostering a community of support and accountability. He addresses common objections to signing the pledge, asserting that divine assistance is crucial for maintaining commitment and overcoming temptation.

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## Transcript

The feeling among Christians against strong drink is growing. By the efforts and self-sacrifice of tens of thousands, a strong public sentiment can be formed, like a mighty breakwater. An arrest may be placed on the onward march of drunkenness, and many a bark, battered by the fury of Passion and Self-indulgence, safely moored in the haven, sheltered from utter ruin, and able to repair its terrible wreckage. Let us do our best to build our few stones into this great breakwater, which is only made up by the small work of unknown and soon-forgotten builders.

One important means by which so much can be done, is the use of the Pledge. It will be a great mistake if the signing of the Pledge should ever fall into disuse, or become an object of contempt

1. Reckon on God. If you desire spiritual gifts, not for your own gratification, but for the glory of Christ; if so far as you know, your heart is rid of evil, and your life of sinful habit; if you perceive that the promise is for you because you are not only a son, but an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ; if you feel an eager desire that God has instilled to lead you to this very point-then open your mouth wide, and believe that God fills it; unshutter every window, and believe that the light enters; throw wide every aperture, and

believe that you have received what you needed and sought. According to your faith, it shall be unto you.

In some moment of need, or when you least expect it, or when engaged in usual toils, some glad consciousness of joy, or peace, or nearness to Christ, or power over others, will be the evidence that you did receive.

2. We must care for others. No life can be blessed which is self-centered, and shut in, as the Dead Sea, by giant walls. The secret of having is giving; of learning is teaching; of climbing to the throne is by stooping to wash the feet of the disciples. Think more of others than yourself, and your own life shall be never so rich and prosperous. "I want-I want Christians to go all over the world, and spread the Gospel " These words, spoken with labored breath, were almost the last uttered by a beloved Christian worker.

And yet in some quarters there is a disposition to think and speak lightly of the Pledge.

"Oh," says one, "I can keep teetotal without signing your Pledge."

"Yes," says another, "it is childish to sign away your freedom."

"It may be all very well," says a third, "for some to do it, but it is not so for me."

Why, then, should we sign the Pledge of Total Abstinence?

Sign the pledge: it is your protest against strong drink.-It is time for every thoughtful person to enter a solemn protest against strong drink, which every year is inflicting such awful havoc. Who can be indifferent to the woes it brings on hearts and homes, on villages and towns, on countries and continents? Well may the Hindus call it "Shame-water." There is hardly a house in which you may not find its slain. There is not a newspaper that does not record its diabolical outrages. There is not a public officer that could not bear damning evidence against it.

We can not do much, but let us do what we can. We have a voice, a right to cry aye or nay, a power to assent or protest. Let us use them by all means on the right side. And if we cannot express our feeling in any other way, let us at least sign a solemn declaration on paper that we will never again touch the cruellest foe that ever reveled in human tears and blood.

Sign the pledge: it will benefit your health. Alcohol 's not more necessary to health than any other chemical or medicinal agent. It excites the heart, hinders digestion, disturbs the liver, and stupefies the brain. It gives a momentary glow and stimulus, but you have to pay for them afterward by an inevitable lessening of vital heat and animal power and mental force. Even in moderate quantities it acts as an irritant and a poison.

The athlete, in training for a boat-race, a prizefight or a running match, must forego the use of alcohol; and if men do not want it for such extraordinary exertions, why do you want it for ordinary ones? English expeditions in Abyssinia, the Transvaal and Egypt, proved that if a General wished his troops to perform forced marches, or to undergo un usual fatigues, he must substitute coffee for grog. The extremes of the Arctic circle and the tropical sun are best endured on cold water, as the experience o many explorers and travelers proves. The tables o insurance offices show that one hundred moderate drinkers die for every seventy-three abstainers, and many offices have a special section to give abstainer the benefits of insurance at a lower price.

It would be a perfect revelation to some who reap these words if they would give total abstinence a trial. Your appetites would be better, your mind would be clearer, your nerves would be stronger, and your whole system would get fitness and tone

Sign the pledge: it will save your time. We have only one short life to live, and we can not afford to fling the diamond moments into the rushing stream beside us. How many days in the fore part of the week are spent by our working-classes in tavern which are a dead loss to them and their families and the country! How many hours are spent by clerks and commercial travelers in the course of the week, at the bars of railway stations and restaurants, which might be sown with the seeds of golden harvest! How many evenings are worse than wasted in convivial company, which might be spent in innocent and health-giving recreation, or in acquiring knowledge which would unlock many a shut door! From all this you would escape, if you signed the Pledge.

Sign the pledge: it will save your purse. - Sit down and calculate how much you spend a day in drink, not only for yourself, but also for those whom you treat. It will amount to a respectable sum in the course of the year. Add to this the money you might earn in the time you now lose. Add to this all the sums squandered wastefully in the company into which habits of drinking lead you. And when all is put together, would it not make a nice amount against a rainy day, or for illness and old age?

I often say to those who sign my pledge cards that there is a \$500 note hidden inside the double cardboard.

Sign the pledge: it will save you from temptation. - You have no intention of becoming a drunkard; you scorn the thought. But there is a risk of your becoming one, so long as you tamper with the drink. You take it now for the sake of society, but you will come to take it for its own sake. You cannot be sure that daily dram-drinking may not do for you what it has done for myriads, in exciting a thirst, now perhaps dormant, but which, when once aroused, will be insatiable. Wise men, good men, strong men have been mastered by that awful thirst, who no more expected such a thing than you do. Is it not folly, then, for you to run the risk of creating it? Why not stop at once, before that thirst has been aroused?

You tell me that it seems hard for you to do without the drink. Then that is a sure sign that the accursed appetite has got a foothold within you. Spring off the car ere it rushes down the incline. Run the boat into a creek ere it is caught by the rapids above the falls. Force the cloven foot back out of the door before the demon has time to thrust his whole body into your heart and life. Do it at once. Do it now. You ask not to be led into temptation, then don't go into it. Taverns are well-called "shades" and "vaults." They are the shades of death, and vaults for the burial of all that is noblest and best in men. Avoid them. Pass them by. Refuse to enter them unless the Good Shepherd sends you there to find a lost sheep.

Sign the pledge: it will make a definite starting point in your history. - In all efforts after a better life it is well to have some landmark or time mark to which to look back and from which to date. There is a sort of satisfaction in being able to point to mental stone-heap, or crease-line, or white-painted post, standing out on the moorland of life, and to say: "Up to that point I lived a selfish, evil life, but since then I have tried to run fair and well, by the help of God."

With some it is a sermon. With others it is a birthday, a death, an entry in the diary, or a New Year's Eve. With others it is the visit of some Gospel temperance advocate to their town. But in many cases, the same purpose is served by signing the pledge. The date of that pledge-card is a birthday, a new start, a beginning of a new era in the story of the soul; and it very often leads to the second step of faith in Christ.

Sign the pledge: it makes a strong obligation.-When a man gives up the drink, he must do all that can be done to strengthen his resolution. If he simply makes a resolution, he feels at liberty to withdraw from it if he choose. But if he double-knots his resolution with a solemn promise to which he has put his hand, then he feels bound by the most solemn obligations. He dare not violate his plighted troth. And in the moment of temptation, his self-respect, his love for truth, his desire to be a man of his word, his written vow, will be a strong reason for saying No

A gentleman who signed the pledge-card recently said that during the whole of the next day he carried it in his pocket, and took it out fifteen times to remind him that he had put his hand to a promise j which he dared not violate, and could not retract.

Sign the pledge: it will give a sufficient answer to those who tempt you to drink. There is no answer that a man can give so good as this. If he refuses because he is hot, he will be advised to drink to get cool. If he refuses because he is cold, he will be recommended to drink to get warm. If he refuses because he can not afford it, his companion will gladly treat him. If he refuses because he is not well, there is no ailment to which flesh is heir for which intoxicating drinks are not prescribed as a certain cure. Men who are well drink till they are ill; and then drink to get themselves well again. None of these excuses avail, but if a man says, `I have signed the pledge." they may think him a fool, but they cannot say that he has not given a sufficient reason; and if they are true men themselves, they dare not ask him to break his word. If a man asks you to drink after you have signed the pledge, lie is no true friend; he is doing the devil's work. He is certain to turn round and insult you after- you have done his will, because he will have lost the last fragment of respect for you. There are some men who must have a reason to give others for doing as they do. Here at least is a clear, straightforward, intelligible reason, which puts an end to controversy, and settles the matter forever-"I have signed the pledge."

Sign the pledge: it keeps it from becoming the badge of a reclaimed drunkard.-If the pledge were only signed by men who had been drunkards, but who were trying to live a new life, it would become the badge of reclaimed drunkards, and it would soon cease to be signed by this class of men who need it most. This would be a great calamity.

"I dare not sign the pledge," said a young doctor to a friend who was trying to get him to do so, as a means of saving him from ruin. "Why not?" was his friend's reply. "Because, if people heard that I had done so, they would say that there must have been a screw loose in my character, and that I was a reclaimed drunkard." "No," said his friend, "they never can say that, for it has been signed by thousands of thousands on whose character there has never been a stain." The answer reassured him. He took the pledge, and is become an earnest Christian worker.

You may not need to sign the pledge for yourself, but sign it that you may give the benefit, the weight, the standing of your own moral character. If every one of reputable and stainless character were to stand aloof, the pledge would be a hopeless failure. Every respectable Christian person who signs it is like one of the corks floating on the surface of the sea, helping to sustain the heavy nets laden with fish.

Sign the pledge: it makes it easier for others to do the same.--We are creatures of fashion. We cannot hell, it. We are made so. What one does, tyre others are apt to do. There's many an eager eye looking to see what the reader of these lines is going to do. If he signs the pledge, that boy, that companion, that servant, will do the same; but if he refuses to do so, it may be that the waiting one will also refuse, and that refusal will lead to ruin.

More eyes are watching us than we think. More lives than we know are on the balance, waiting for the feather of our example to turn them this way or that. Are we right in leaving anything undone that might save one for whom Christ died? We must use all means to save some, though the use of the means compel us to forego some boasted liberty, or some loved indulgence. Don't say that you have no influence. It is only an excuse, you have; you would not like another to say that. "I have no influence," said a man to one who asked him to take the pledge for the sake of others. His wife came up at that moment and said, "That's true, you have no more influence than a cat." "If you say that again, woman," said he, "I will knock you down." Of course you have influence. Use it well.

Sign the pledge: it will win you friends.--We all need friends, and if we have given up those who gather round the drink, we need others, and we almost likely to find these wherever there are pledge cards to be had for signature. It is all very well to resolve to give up drink and to keep the vow secretly but it is much better to take the pledge in the presence of one or more persons, who shall bear witness to what they have seen, and who will be bound to you in the bonds of a new and common brotherhood because they have done the same thing, and are pledged to the same cause.

## OBJECTIONS

But I do not like to sign away my liberty.-Then if you are unmarried, you will never be married; you'll surely never promise to love and honor any one individual, because you may want to change your mind. And what is true in this case is true in others and is a sufficient answer to the objection.

If you like, take the pledge for a short time only as you take the lease of a house. You can easily renew it again and again. Or, better still, promise to abstain, by God's help, from all intoxicating drinks as a beverage, until you return your pledge-card to a friend. This will give you an opportunity of relinquishing it when you choose, and it will give him an opportunity of speaking earnestly with you when your purpose is faltering.

But I may be forced to drink.-If you are, you will not violate your pledge. You only promise to abstain from intoxicants as a beverage. If it is poured down your throat by force, or when you are fainting; if the physician compels you to take it; if you take it unawares in some dish of cookery; your pledge is not broken. It is not you that break it. But I have taken it, and broken more than once. Then take it again, in humble dependence on the Saviour, who has been manifested to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3 : 8) .

Most, if not all, total abstinence pledges lay stress on the words-GOD HELPING ME. These words are the heart of all. If they are not felt deep down in the soul, the pledge is not good for much, it rests on mere human strength. But when God is appealed to, the case is altered. Divine power pours into the spirit which is lifted up to Him in prayer and trust. Angel hands are stretched out to hold back the erring feet. A holy garrison is put inside the weak and trembling nature to hold it against the foe. Ask the Lord Jesus to forgive the past. Ask Him to save you from your enemy. Ask Him to shield you in the day of battle. Ask Him, when the door is nearly battered in, to put His foot against it and keep it closely shut. He is able to keep you from stumbling. He is able to keep that which you commit to Him. He is able to make you more than a conqueror. Put yourself into His hands before you leave your room in the morning. Keep looking to Him all day. Praise Him for His grace each night.

"What's that, that you keep mumbling to yourself?" said a working man to another at a little distance from him in the same shop.

"I keep on saying `Lord help me,'" was the reply; "I say it day and night. It is the only way I know of to keep down my thirst for the drink."

Take heart, my friends. The battle may be sharp, but victory is sure. And when once you stand firm on the rock, be on the alert to rescue others from the raging waters of strong drink.

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