

## *Official Resignation from Emmanuel Church and Ministry Duties*

*Elder/Dr, Frank Chase Jr, Th.d*

Dear Apostle Watkins and Elders and Deacons of Emmanuel Church International;

Grace, Mercy and Peace be unto you on this day of our Lord. Several weeks and months ago, you were informed of my theological shift from tithing to grace giving. After 30 years of tithing and pondering this matter in my heart and studying both camps who argue for and against tithing, I told you of my personal decision. Since that time, I have been buried in study about this topic and have concluded that the tithe teaching lacks scholarship and cannot be biblically proven in the New Covenant beyond a shadow of doubt. The tithe teachers in the body of Christ who force or mandate tithing would not withstand a cross-examination on a witness stand by a counsel of scholars and theologians. Of all the written material I've seen for tithing, just says you must tithe because it is commanded by God. They have no scholarship behind what they say to back them up. However on the other hand, there is much scholarship from church history, theologically and scholastically to prove the case against mandatory tithing by force, compulsion or of necessity. Many who argue against tithing agree with you that giving under grace requires more, (More of What? Just Money). More is relative to what a person has and not what a person does not have. Based on the Jewish sources I've read, good works of giving (concerning Money) is encouraged with a warning that one should not endanger the family budget by thoughtless giving. There is a lot of thoughtless and gimmick giving going on in charismatic churches. Grace giving is not limited to just money to pay a church mortgage. The Bible does have a charge to the rich of this world and that they should learn to share their wealth. The message of giving should not be just to working class people, but to Bill Gates, Oprah, and all the other rich of this world. Why aren't we knocking on their doors telling them to give to the work of God?

Because of my position on this matter, I realize that it has created some conflict and probably more so to the bottom line of the church. Certainly, I am painfully aware of that. But because of my conviction, study and the Holy Spirit, I can never return to tithing under the dispensation of Grace. Again, my thoughts and heart have changed because of revealed truth. The journey to find truth on this matter started 30 years ago. I must admit that I am overjoyed the Holy Spirit can and does teach you when you seek the truth from your heart. Because tithing is no longer my position, it is unethical for me to continue in this ministry. Based on your teaching and position that leaders in your church must tithe, it is unethical for you to keep me in leadership. As I have told you in the past, if I become a hindrance to you or your church and the doctrines you set forth, I would withdraw myself from all functions and duties of leadership. As a result, I requested to be put on Sabbatical until we came to a conclusion of this matter. Over the ongoing weeks and months, I've come to the realization that an impenetrable impasse is blocking this matter from being solved.

Now after six months, I now realize through prayer and great trepidation that my time at Emmanuel Church has come to an end because of forced tithing methods that are wanting. When I decided to change my theology on tithing, I did it with knowledge that I would be at odds with much of the Christian community who are simply ignorant of the biblical and secular history, the land, the language, and the literature of the Jewish Levites and Priests for whom tithing was established in the Old Testament because they had no land inheritance in Canaan. When I disagreed with you, I did it in the spirit of the Berean Jews who, with great respect for Paul, did not accept Paul's message right away but choose

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to search the scriptures to see if what he said was true. Since I've been on sabbatical, I've searched the scriptures, read books, examined history on this tithing issue and have found that tithe teaching as propagandized in the Body of Christ today is categorically unscriptural and is tantamount to spiritual and financial extortion akin to mafia tactics. Honestly, since, the day I accepted Christ in my life in 1980, I was always suspicious of tithing and never truly accepted the tithing message, but was too afraid to challenge it and study it thoroughly. I was indoctrinated into a spirit of fear for not tithing soon after my conversion. Now that I realize that God did not give me a spirit of fear but man did, I cannot agree with tithing anymore. I cannot in good conscience continue to exist at Emmanuel Church knowing that a major difference exists between you and I on this issue. After 30 thirty years of being deceived by fear, here are my heartfelt thoughts to the body of Christ.

My thoughts are based on the Rabbi's way of teaching which was and still is based on discussion and debates. Please don't let anyone tell you I'm in rebellion, and if they do, they don't understand the relationship of the rabbi and the student. You may not agree with me, but you should be thankful and proud of what you produced in me and taught me to think more deeply rather than be a parrot man. No Rabbi kept his students forever.

My purpose for changing my mind goes to the core of a metateneo experience. In the spirit of the Jewish Rabbi/Student relationship, my shift also represents what most Jewish Rabbis taught their students and that is the practice of learning how to challenge, debate and argue well with their Rabbi on Torah issues. A student who never questions what their Rabbi or Pastor says would not be considered an excellent student. In the spirit of my Jewish Savior Yeshua, I've entered this debate because this is how Jews studied and how teaching was done in the Bible. By me offering my points and your offering your counter points over the bully pulpit, we will both learn more truth on this subject. As it stands today, you and I have come down on opposite sides of this argument. In my mind that is OK among theologians. As you continue to read, know that my thoughts on this issue are not directed at you but at the lack of study by those who try to teach something they have never given serious study.

In all, this situation is not so strange. It reminds me of the incident in Acts 15: 36-41 when Barnabas and Paul came into sharp dispute over the reliability of John who is also called Mark. Because of the appearance of our sharp disagreement about grace giving in the New Covenant vs mandatory tithing under the Law of Moses in the Old Covenant, it is proper etiquette that we part company like Paul and Barnabas for now in the interest of peace and as Hebrews 12:14-15 says: <sup>14</sup>Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: <sup>15</sup>Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. I know people will say, tithing was before the law, but make sure the people also know that Abraham was not commanded to give it, and what he tithed came from the spoils of war. Plus he was already made rich based on a promise God made to him not because God commanded him to tithe. There is no biblical record that Abraham tithed any of his personal wealth and the nail in the coffin is that the Bible records that he only tithed once and no other text records he ever tithed again. Using Abraham as proof-text is somewhat weak to build a foundation of tithing for the New Covenant. I know people will say that tithing is an expression of devotion by sincere people but the fact remains, it is still a ceremonial law and an ordinance that was nailed to the Cross. Therefore tithing is low-realm, obsolete and defunct and the pontificators of tithing ultimately introduce weakness and confusion in the minds of believers.

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Let me make myself perfectly clear. If a person of their free will decides to give a percentage of their income to the work of the Lord then of course that is their decision based on Grace and not out of fear of a curse ripped from a biblical text and given new meaning. But as soon as giving is called a tithe that's mandated, forced, or becomes a requirement based on Malachi chapter three or Matthew chapter 23 or some other dubious implied command from the Bible, it represents poor hermeneutics and sloppy exegesis. Tithe teachers who hold Malachi 3 to the heads of God's people like a 357 magnum and pull the trigger with a curse upon them have committed the greatest betrayal of GRACE and the work of Christ on the cross that almost rivals Judas' betrayal of Christ with a kiss. Of everything I've witnessed over thirty years, no one has ever been able to explain why there are ghettos and inner cities still full of generations of tithers who remain one paycheck away from the soup kitchen. Ok, I get it, the answer has always been, they did not put their seed in the right place. Saying we've been blessed by tithing does not make it true Biblically. We are blessed because of the New Covenant Principles of giving, not paying tithes. None of the epistles or letters written by the Apostles instructed or exhorted New Covenant believers to tithe, not as a law, a principle or even as a voluntary practice.

In the Old Testament tithing is compulsory and does not translate to grace giving under the New Covenant. The tithe teachers throughout history have taught tithing on a weak foundation of proof text or proof text methodology. By definition and the verses, I've heard used to extract tithes from people using slick fund raising techniques over my 30 years do not understand that, "a proof text is a verse or short passage from the Bible used by someone as part of his/her proof for a doctrinal belief he wishes to substantiate to others. However, since verses and passages may rely extensively on the context in which they appear for correct interpretation, pulling these verses out their context and having them stand alone in "proof" can at times be very misleading. In addition, a set of such proof texts can completely ignore other passages which, if added to the mix, might well lead to an entire different conclusion. Someone who relies strongly only on a list of proof texts in order to make a doctrinal argument may have a very weak case for his argument. Noting that a religious teacher relies heavily on proof text methodology is viewed in theological circles as very negative in evaluation." For example, after my examination Malachi 3:10 and reading the whole book in its context, the infamous verse used by many to support their tithing position fail to realize this book is not talking to or suggesting any Gentile or New Covenant believer to tithe but it speaks only to certain Israelites in the promised land. Even if tithing was actually commanded in the New Covenant (Which it is not), how can anyone teach 10 percent and not teach the other poor tithe and the festival which was eaten by the tither outlined under the law. I bet no leader in Today's church would demand three tithes amounting to 22 percent or more of people's income and then ask for a free will offering to boot. In fact, if we follow this logic, to obey any part of the law and not do all of it, we are guilty and accountable for all it. For tithe teachers to prove a doctrinal point, proof text methodology is essential because it allows them to ignore the context of the whole book or chapter. In fact tithing money did not become an enforced law in the church until 777AD. The Catholic Church changed the tithe from food (wine, fruit, cattle, herds, oil, seeds sheep) to money. Now we know why they richest religious organization on earth.

According to the Jewish Mishnah and the Talmud writers, tithes were always defined as everything eatable, and everything that was stored up or that grew out of the earth. In the Old Testament money was not a titheable commodity only crops, produce and cattle. For 1600 years after the tithe was established it remained a food item up to Mat 23:23

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of Jesus' time. And upon careful examination, the Pharisees extended the tithe of the Mosaic Law in the Talmud to include spices of anise, cumin, and mint, which was never a part of the original Law of Moses or the first five books of the Bible. It got so bad, they would count seeds to prove they were better tithers than everyone else.

Biblical History and secular history on this subject is replete with examples of the tithing wars among Christian leaders that have raged over the centuries. Even in our doctorate class, Apostle, you introduced us to Martin Luther's stand for salvation by grace and not confessing to a priest. Today, we hail him for his stand. Why did you ignore or fail to declare the whole counsel about the man's beliefs and that he preached against tithing way back in a sermon on August 27, 1525? The title was How Christians Should Regard Moses. Here's are some excerpts from Dr. Kelly's book on what Luther said about Law and Grace which can be found on the internet, *"The law of Moses binds only the Jews not the Gentiles. Here the Law of Moses has its place. It is no longer binding on us because it was given only to the people of Israel. And Israel accepted this law for itself and its descendants, while the Gentiles were excluded. Moses has nothing to do with us. We will not regard him as our lawgiver—unless he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law. For not one little part of Moses pertains to us. But the other commandments of Moses which are by nature, the Gentiles do not hold. Nor do these pertain to Gentiles, such as the **TITHE** and others equally fine which I wish we had done."* We also know that Martin Luther had some anti-Semitic tendencies.

You did agree that since the New Covenant standards are higher than the Old Covenant and if you ever accepted grace giving, the minimum standard would be ten percent at the start. In the final analysis, I would have to reject that viewpoint because after Calvary there is no biblical text to support any exact percentage as a starting point in the New Testament. Paul never instructed anyone on what percentage to give. The principle of interpreting New Covenant Giving starting at ten percent sounds good, but is pure assumption when the Old Testament indicates 30 percent. You simply can't teach one part of the Law for ten percent and ignore the other 20 percent. That's why the New Covenant starts with no percentages and is filled with "free-will giving principles only. Because of that, giving could range from 0 to 100 percent based on what a person has, not what a person does not have; not under compulsion or reluctantly but by ability and cheerfulness.

After thirty years of tithing, my heart aches at the carnage of mixed messages the tithe teaching Community has left behind and the many shattered lives and the new converts who will be damaged by this grace less teaching in the future.

As I continue in search for truth, I submit this resignation with no malice because I know that tithe teachers need forgiveness too for they know not what they do. For we all are in need of the Grace of God when disputes arise. This may be hard for all of us, but I must take this journey in my life to grace giving. A man who does not follow his heart as he believes God has shown him will ultimately live life with regret and "what ifs". As brothers in the Lord, we must release each other so it will work out for our good. As Paul and Mark got back together over time, I'm sure we will too in time. I depart in grace, mercy and peace that God can only give those who are on both sides of this centuries old problem.

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Shalom,

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