

LEAVE / FORSAKE

(ἀφῆκες = 'ufikes')

To leave alone, forsake, abandon, to let go or give up, to disregard, neglect.

Revelation 2:4, “*Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*” Note, The word “left” (ἀφῆκες) can mean; ‘to let go’, ‘to neglect’, ‘forsake’, or ‘leave alone’ (abandon). The church at Ephesus had forgotten the most important aspect of a church. This may also mean they had bad attitudes - that they were once enthusiastic but are now apathetic. Yet more importantly, the love that they had for Christ, and for one another, had diminished.

They had forsaken their first love. The Greek word ἀφῆκες can have a very strong meaning – to *abandon or disregard* as in abandoning a child. In this instance, we are told that **love** was *let go, left out, neglected, abandoned, disregarded*. It implies that love was severely disrespected! As we all know, love sometimes grows faint - and such was the situation at Ephesus. In the next verse the Lord encourages these believers to **repent**, and “*remember from where you have fallen*” (verse 5). The word “fallen” is interesting. It can denote a flower that has withered (*James 1:11; 1 Peter 1:24*), or a ship out of control (*Acts 27: 17,26*). Regardless of possessing any other admirable qualities, without **love** one gets withered and void of controlled direction.

The *deeds* the Ephesians did at first definitely involved forsaking everything else and devoting themselves strictly and exclusively to Jesus. In radical love for Him, they threw off everything else they had trusted in, or depended upon, and they abandoned themselves to their wonderful Saviour. And to Him alone! He became the great *love of their hearts* - even at great personal cost. In spite of this good track record, Jesus is calling the Ephesian church back to His **love**. He asks them to remember who they are and who He is - *to hold on to Him and to dwell in Him*.

When we slip, it is gradual and we often do not notice. Sometimes, we do not care or see this as a problem, so we just grow faint. Therefore, to call us back, on occasion Jesus must threaten judgment. Unless we start running our lives as we have been called to do, there will be consequences. This is serious business! If an unloving church (or Christian) repents, they can be given another chance to serve and glorify Christ. If not, the lampstand (the anointing) is removed! And remember, anointing represents God’s presence. Something any sensible person would avoid at all costs!

But what does it mean to have “left” or “abandoned,” your first love? Firstly, notice that it is identified here as something that requires *repentance*. Secondly, this repentance must include doing the deeds you did at first. Remember, God defines **love** as the first and second greatest commandments. The “love” instructions we are given are so great that all the Law and all that the prophets wrote are summarised in these two compulsory rules of conduct (*Matthew 22:38-40, Romans 13:8, Galatians 5:14*). Firstly, **love God** with all your being. Secondly, **love your neighbour** as much as you love yourself. Love for God is most often defined in the Scriptures as “*if you love Me, you will keep my commandments.*” (*John 14:15, 2 John 1:6*)

Love for our neighbours is most often defined in the Scriptures as something like, "*putting the needs of others ahead of our own desires*" (Romans 12:10, Philippians 2:3). So which **love** did the Ephesians leave behind, or neglect? Love for God or love for one another? Probably both!