

Naomi offer her? Ruined, stricken of God and full of bitterness, had she yet any more sons in her womb to give as husbands to her daughters in law? Orpah kisses her mother in law and returns unto her people *and unto her gods* (ver. 15). There at last is the secret of the natural heart exposed. It can cling to the people of God without belonging to Him. A woman like Naomi is well deserving of sympathy, but there is no indication of faith there. Faith separates us from idols *from the very first*, causing us to abandon *our gods*, and it turns us to the true God. Such was the first step of the Thessalonians in the path of faith (1 Thes. i. 9). Orpah, on the contrary, turns away from Naomi and from the God of Israel, to turn back unto her people and unto her gods. Struggling with the difficulty she shows herself incapable of bearing the strain. She goes away weeping, but she goes away, like that amiable young man who departed very sorrowful, not being able to make up his mind to part with his possessions to follow a Master that was poor and despised.

Very different is Ruth's case. Precious faith, full of assurance, determination and decision! How clearly she sees her way! Nothing seems to move her. She listens to Naomi, but her conviction is settled, for she knows of only one path, which, for her, is the *necessary* one. What becomes of the *impossibilities* of nature, before the *necessities* of faith? Ruth does not allow herself to be stopped by the impossibility of getting a