

## Understanding the Book of Proverbs through a Law/Gospel lens

### Chapter 8

Historically Proverbs 8 is a very \_\_\_\_\_ passage<sup>1</sup>. In fact, one could say that this has been one of the most important passages in the history of the church. One author writing about Proverbs 8 stated that this passage was “one of the most important texts for the early church’s understanding of Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly this passage has been used by people to deny the doctrine of the Trinity (such as the Arians did in the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup> and the Socinians did in the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>). At the same time, this passage was commonly used by the \_\_\_\_\_ to prove the doctrine of the Trinity (men such as Athanasius, Calvin, Owen, and Edwards saw the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son as being supported by Proverbs 8).

#### **Proverbs 8:1-21-The \_\_\_\_\_ of Wisdom**

**1-3** Wisdom is also \_\_\_\_\_ found and is calling aloud to the simple

**4-9** Wisdom does not deceive but gives \_\_\_\_\_ to its listeners

**10-11** Wisdom is to be desired more than all \_\_\_\_\_

**12-13** Wisdom \_\_\_\_\_ one from a life of slavery to evil

**14-16** All that is \_\_\_\_\_ flows from Wisdom

**17** Wisdom can be found by those who \_\_\_\_\_ it

**18-21** Wisdom exceedingly blesses those who \_\_\_\_\_ her

#### **Proverbs 8:22-31-The \_\_\_\_\_ of Wisdom**

Anti-trinitarians have used 8:22-23 to teach that Christ was created, there syllogism follows this pattern:

- A. If Christ is the Wisdom of God
- B. The Wisdom of God is said to be created
- C. Christ, therefore, must have been created

---

<sup>1</sup> One author writes, “This text has also been at the center of some of the most important theological debates in church history.” <https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/gods-greater-wisdom>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jesus-proverbs/>

<sup>3</sup> Athanasius, writing about how the Arians loved Proverbs 8:22, says, “*they make all places sound with this passage from the Proverbs.*”

<sup>4</sup> John Owen wrote an entire work against the Socinians entitled “The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated” where he directly deals with their false understanding of Proverbs 8 (devoting a large portion of chapter 9 to this text).

How is this kind of thinking to be combatted? How can this text be understood that is not anti-trinitarian?

There are several things to remember here:

1. Remember the \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture you are in

*“For it is written, ‘The Lord created me a beginning of His ways, for His works;’ since, however, these are proverbs, and it is expressed in the way of proverbs, we must not expound them nakedly in their first sense...the Lord himself has taught us in the Gospel according to John, ‘These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs, but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but openly.’ (John 16:25) Therefore it is necessary to unfold the sense of what is said, and to seek it as something hidden, and not nakedly to expound as if the meaning were spoken, ‘plainly,’ lest by a false interpretation we wander from the truth.”<sup>5</sup>*

2. \_\_\_\_\_ never follows a strict one-to-one formula (otherwise it wouldn’t be typology)
3. Remember the principle of “regula fidei” (\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_)
4. Wisdom is here given a place \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ creation (not part of the created order)-notice the parallel with John 1:1-3.
5. If Wisdom was created what does that mean for God’s \_\_\_\_\_ (that He was at one time foolish)
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ is primarily in view here

*“Thus it is said of Him, with respect unto His future incarnation and work of mediation, that the Lord possessed Him in the beginning of His way, before His works of old; that He was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was: Proverbs 8:22-23).”<sup>6</sup>*

7. This portion actually gives \_\_\_\_\_ to the doctrine of eternal generation, rather than denying it (verse 23)

*“He who was begotten of God the Father with an eternal generation is eternal, and so, consequently, God; but so is Jesus Christ be-gotten of God the Father with an eternal generation: therefore, he is eternal, and God blessed forever.”<sup>7</sup>*

### **Proverbs 8:32-36-An appeal to get Wisdom**

Find wisdom and get \_\_\_\_\_. To reject wisdom is to bring ruin upon one’s own head.

---

<sup>5</sup> “Second Discourse Against the Arians” by Athanasius

<sup>6</sup> “Christology” by John Owen

<sup>7</sup> “The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated” by Owen