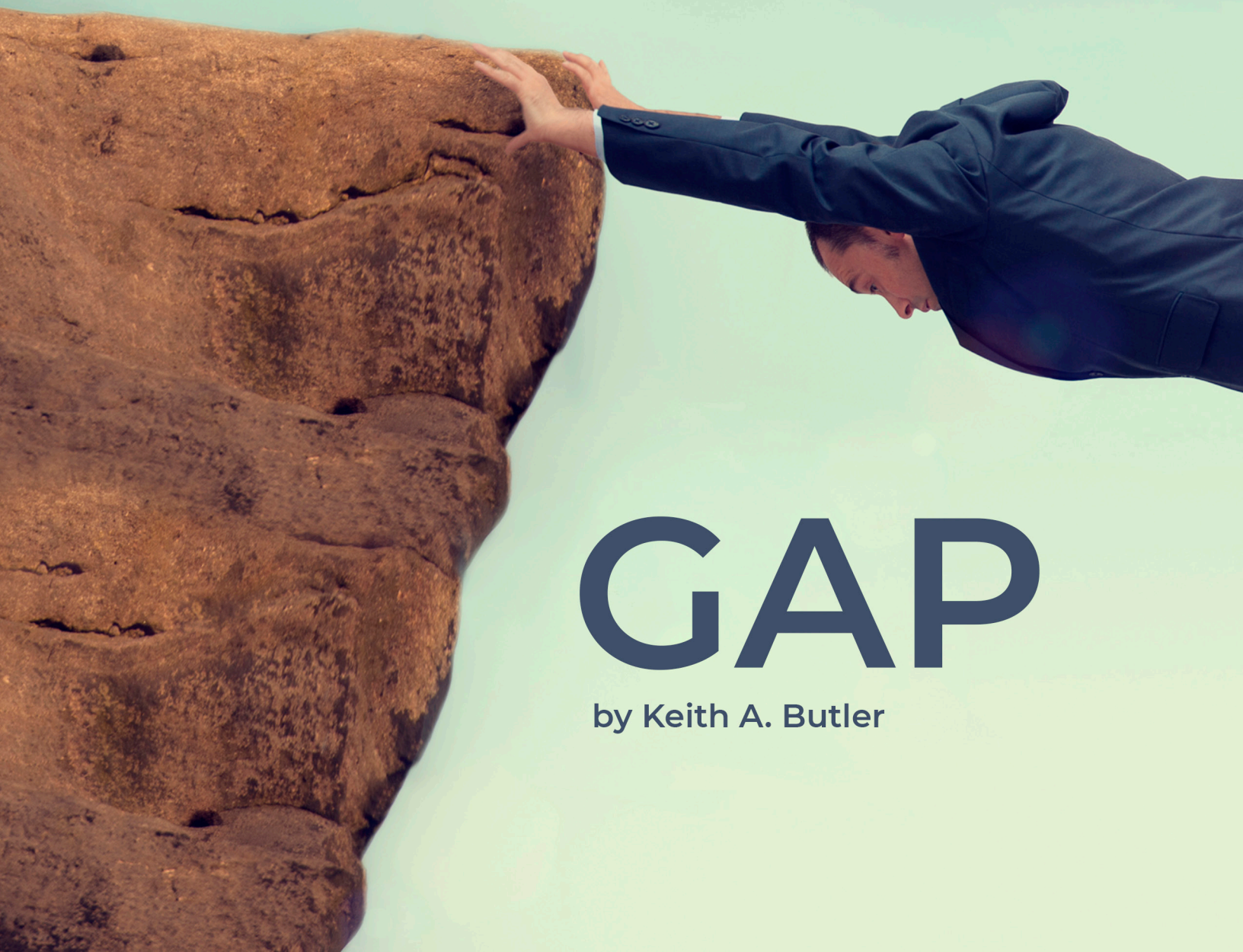


**STANDING
IN THE**



GAP

by Keith A. Butler



Dear Partner, as Christians, we are so blessed to be part of the New Covenant! Praise God for all He has done for us in Christ Jesus! Did you know that God's people in the Old Testament suffered some things that we don't have to endure in the New Testament? Now, to be clear, God does not change; that is a truth from Scripture. *"For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"* (Malachi 3:6).

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning.

God's eternal qualities are all good because He is absolute good. There is no evil or bad in Him at all! For example, consider a few Scriptures that describe Him.

1 John 4:8

He that loveth not knoweth not God; God is love.

Psalms 116:5

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

Exodus 34:5-7

And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and

gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

God's character is consistent and eternal, but the way He has interacted with man has changed through different times, or as Bible scholars call them, dispensations. Today we are blessed to function as born-again, Spirit-filled children of God.

The Old Testament saints longed to see the blessings we enjoy! For example, Solomon, writing in the book of *Ecclesiastes*, lamented about the multitudes who were without a Comforter.

Ecclesiastes 4:1

So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

Solomon noted that the oppressors had all power and there was no one to help the oppressed. He went on to say that because of such oppression, it was better to be dead than alive! What a sad state of affairs!

Ecclesiastes 4:2-3

Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

We have so much to be thankful for! The Old Testament faithful did not have a Comforter, but thank God, we do! *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).*

Jesus was the Comforter for His disciples when He walked the earth, and when He ascended into Heaven, He sent the Holy Ghost as another Comforter for us.

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 16:20

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Partner, we have the Holy Ghost within us and upon us because of Jesus. Besides needing a Comforter, the Old Testament saints knew they needed an intercessor, but until Jesus came, there was none!

Isaiah 59:14-16

And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him

that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

God's people were suffering because of what was happening in society. What God said was right, but was considered wrong, and what God said was wrong was accepted by society as right. Isaiah mentioned this condition again in the fifth chapter of his book.

Isaiah 5:20

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Although the prophet recognized the problem, God's people still didn't have an intercessor, and therefore they lacked righteous judgment. **Throughout the Old Testament, God was searching for an intercessor—someone who would stand in the gap between God and man.**

Ezekiel 22:29-30

The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

God didn't find any man who could stand in the gap in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, we have such an Intercessor; His name is Jesus!

Isaiah, in his prophecy about the suffering Messiah, foretold of Jesus' healing and redemptive work, and many people are familiar with *Isaiah 53:5* that says, *“...and with his stripes we are healed.”* However,

many people aren't aware that Isaiah also prophesied about Jesus' intercessory ministry in the same chapter.

Isaiah 53:11-12

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

By Jesus' stripes we were healed, by Jesus' blood we were redeemed, and by Jesus' intercessory ministry, we can approach the throne of God with boldness.

The word *intercessor* means *one who stands in the gap*. Our sins created a massive gap between God and us, but when Jesus died on the cross, He became the intermediary for man.

The New Testament uses the word *advocate* to describe Jesus' role as Comforter and Intercessor. *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 2:1-2).

Advocate means *counselor, comforter, intercessor*. In the United States, the term advocate and lawyer are often used synonymously. However, in some countries, advocates are specialized lawyers; they are the only ones who can take your case to a higher court.

Partner, as New Testament believers, Jesus is our Advocate. He is the Intercessor that unites God and man.

Here's an important scriptural point—in the New Testament, every time you see the word *intercession*, it is referring to what Jesus or the Holy Spirit does for us.

In the Old Testament, when people didn't obey God's law, the enemy came in like a flood.

Isaiah 59:18-20

According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

God's people under the Old Covenant had to walk perfectly in His laws. When they did, they were blessed. *Deuteronomy 28* underscores the extent of God's blessings for obedience and His curses for disobedience under the Law.

Deuteronomy 28:1-3

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

Deuteronomy 28:15-16

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command

thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.

But Partner, we have a better covenant than God's chosen people! *Hebrews 8:6* says we have a, "*better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*" In fact, that Greek word *better* there means *stronger covenant*. We're not like those in the Old Testament who were helpless against the oppressor!

Hebrews 4:16 tells us that we can approach the throne of grace with boldness, find mercy, and receive grace to help in our time of need.

James 4:7 explains to us that we can resist the devil, and he will flee!

Colossians 2:15 reminds us that Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

1 John 4:4 confirms for us that the Holy Spirit dwells in our born-again spirits, and greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

Partner, Pastor Deborah and I pray for you daily. You are important to us. More importantly, you are important to our Lord! You are always on our minds and in our hearts.

If you have a specific prayer request and would like prayer, please call us at our KBM Partner Care Center at 248.353.3476, ext. 256. Or, if you would like to email your prayer request, you may do so by sending it to partners@keithbutler.org. You may also submit your prayer request through our website at www.keithbutler.org.

If you are seeking guidance from God, don't look outside. Don't lay a fleece before God saying things such as, "*God if you want me to do this, then send a red car across my path today.*" That was how God led some in the Old Testament, but now the Holy Spirit lives in you! **God will speak to you by His Spirit in your inner man. Learn to listen.**

Partner, when you need guidance, "*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful*" (*Colossians 3:15*). Don't neglect the last part of that verse: **be thankful that we operate at a higher level than they did under the Old Covenant!**



**BISHOP KEITH & PASTOR DEBORAH
BUTLER**