

According to Marxsen, Paul the Pharisee was waiting for God's justifying judgment to be pronounced in the future, at the end of time. Paul the Christian, by contrast, proceeds in the conviction that God's justifying judgment has already been pronounced in the past, through Jesus Christ.

This contrast implies two very different, indeed, mutually exclusive views of salvation. On the one view, salvation lies ahead of us in the future, and our task in the present is to get ready for it by learning what God commands in the law and then keeping God's commandments. On this view, God pronounces God's justifying judgment, thereby accepting us and entering into communion with us, only if we have kept God's commandments. Thus our obedience to the law is a necessary condition of God's justifying judgment, and God's righteousness in pronouncing it depends on our first establishing our own righteousness. On the other view, salvation has already been accomplished in the past, and our task in the present is to accept it and, on that basis, to keep God's commandment in which all the commandments of the law are summed up. On this view, God pronounces God's justifying judgment, thereby accepting us and entering into communion with us, even though we have not kept God's commandments. Thus our obedience to the law is not a necessary condition of God's justifying judgment, and God's righteousness in pronouncing it is independent of our first establishing our own.

At the heart of this contrast are two conflicting understandings of God. For one, God is the One who requires our fulfilling the law as a necessary *condition* of God's pronouncing God's justifying judgment. For the other, God is the One who pronounces God's justifying judgment unconditionally, our fulfilling the law being a necessary *consequence* of our accepting God's judgment rather than a necessary condition of God's pronouncing it.

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