GRADED ABSOLUTISM (HIGHER LAWS)

• God's commands exist on a hierarchy. • Some commands of God have more weight than others. • In a moral dilemma, choose the one that is more important. • The lesser com-mand is not violated, it is simply overpowered by a higher law. • God does not hold one guilty for doing what is morally obligated. • This ethic best explains not only the words and actions of Jesus, but others in the Bible as well.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS IN THE MOST LOVING WAY

1. Obeying God is a higher obligation than obeying man.

God has placed a number of human authorities over us. They have been delegated by God, and are therefore under God, and are not absolute in and of themselves. To render unconditional obedience to a human is to place them equal to God, and to be guilty of idolatry.

Acts 4:18-20 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

2. Saving innocent life is a higher obligation than telling the truth.

Telling the truth is a specific command that rests upon the moral absolute of love, and that moral absolute itself rests upon the nature of God, who himself is love.

The intent of the command (to be truthful) is therefore to do good, to serve and help others. It was never intended to be used to further evil, to cause the helpless to suffer or lose their lives.

There is no moral obligation whatsoever to tell the truth to those who intend to use that truth to harm innocent people.

3. Serving people is a higher obligation than preserving things.

We should never place any possession, material thing, or animal (including the family pet) in higher regard than

human life. We should be willing to give up all such possessions to save even one human life.

Things are to be used, people are to be loved. People are not a means to an end. Things are.

Human life trumps property rights.

Man has intrinsic worth because 1) he is made in the image of God; 2) he is an immortal being; 3) God the Son died for his sins.

4. Saving many persons is a higher obligation than saving a few persons.

If one person has intrinsic value, then two persons have more, and the most persons possible have most value.

This would mean that if one were faced with a decision which involved the possibility of saving either five lives or one life, then he should save the most lives possible.

5. Helping an innocent victim is a higher obligation than respecting the rights of an evil oppressor.

In a fallen world, physical force may have to be used to defend the innocent against an attacker.

Love forbids using more force than what is absolutely necessary. Deadly force is always the last resort.

By going on the attack, the attacker assumes the risk of being attacked. He forfeits his right to be treated with equal respect and protection. This is in proportion to the severity of his offense.

What about Matthew 5:39?

Using force cannot be justified unless there is also a reasonable expectation of actually helping the victim.