

# SHOULD CHRISTIANS KEEP AND BEAR ARMS

page1

**Pastor Jack Jones**

Not long ago I was asked about whether Christians have the right to bear arms for self-defense, to defend their family, and even for the purpose of protecting the community at large if need be.

I should say from the outset that it has always been my understanding that Christians and non-Christians alike have the right to self-defense and to protect innocent life when confronted with deadly force, but up till now I had not done a thorough in-depth study from inspiration as to the rightness or wrongness of it. And so, today I'd like to share with you some of what I have found.

According to the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution, which I believe is an inspired document when you understand the history of it and the founding of our country, citizens have the right to keep and bear arms and that this right shall not be infringed, or meddled with, but we certainly do see it being meddled with today, don't we? Also, the first amendment that deals with freedom of speech is being meddled with, but that will have to be a subject for another time. But as far as Christians owning weapons for self-defense, we want to know what God has to say about it?

Now, this might not seem like a subject to preach about, but nearly all the information I'll be sharing with you today is from God's word, and isn't everything in the Bible there for a reason and for the purpose of informing us what's right and what's wrong, what's moral and what's immoral?

Because we live in a world that's growing more and more evil, and because we read and hear stories, almost daily now about the wanton taking of life and crime of every sort, I think this is a subject that many Christians think about, and you may be surprised to learn that inspiration doesn't leave us in the dark.

Recently I heard a sermon by a well-known minister, even while I was in the midst of preparing this study to share with you today, so this is not in retaliation, because I was already planning to do this. But the position taken was that Christians should not bear arms, because the one who does is likely to depend upon themselves rather than upon the Lord; that we are to trust wholly in the Lord to fight our battles and deliver us from anyone who might attack us and our families, and I have to say that I totally disagree with that position, because it's presumptuous to think that faith is all that's needed when we are faced with evil, both literally and spiritually. And so, I'm well aware that there are others who might disagree with what I'm about to share with you today, and you yourself might disagree, but I believe there is plenty of inspired information that will support the idea that it is acceptable in God's eyes to bear arms for self-defense and to do what is physically necessary to stop someone who is intent on doing us or our loved ones physical harm, and if you're opposed to this I would ask that you at least hear me out before you turn me off.

To begin with I'd like for us to consider the evidence for self-defense from nature, God's second book, and that it's an inherent right that has been given us by our Creator for the purpose of protecting ourselves and our loved ones by whatever means possible should we be confronted with deadly force.

When you think about various kinds of animals, is there any that come to mind that have built in self-defense mechanisms to ward off predators? How about the porcupine, the skunk, and the rattlesnake to name a few? Also, there are many other kinds of creatures such as poisonous frogs, beetles, hornets, moose, deer, antelope and so on with their antlers. Even in the oceans of the world there are sea creatures that have self-defense mechanisms of various kinds, and also the birds. Some creatures have

camouflage abilities, some play dead, some use trickery and mimic other creatures to make their enemies think they're something they're not. Turtles have a protective shell that make it difficult for predators to get through, and there are electric eels that can give their enemies quite a shock, and on and on it goes.

And most of these creatures won't bother you if you don't bother them, and isn't that how we should be? We don't go around looking for trouble, but if it finds us through no fault of our own, we should be able to stop a predator that's intent on doing us or our families harm.

And so, nature teaches us that the means for self-defense are God-given and have become necessary because we live in a sinful world. And just as there are animals that prey upon other animals, this is also the case with some of the two-legged varieties we call human beings.

Besides nature, and more importantly, we also have the Scriptures. Remember the angel that guarded the way to the entrance to the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve had to leave? What kind of weapon did the angel use? In **Genesis 3:24** it says he used "a flaming sword" so sinners couldn't come in and eat the fruit from the tree of life and live forever as sinners? And remember the angel who was armed with a sword when he appeared to Balaam as he rode upon his donkey? The donkey could see it, but Balaam was so intent upon his greed that he couldn't see what the donkey saw. And the Bible says the angel would have killed Balaam if it wasn't for his donkey veering off course. You can read that in **Numbers 22:33**. And how about **Joshua 5:13-15** when Jesus Himself appeared before Joshua as a man of war armed with a sword? Even the Mosaic law granted the right to self-defense. In **Exodus 22:2** it says that if a thief breaks into your house at night and you kill him, you are not guilty of murder. Also in Psalm 144:1 David said it was God who taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight, and thus he was prepared for his battle with Goliath.

I don't know if you ever thought about it before, but that sling David used to kill the giant was a very lethal assault weapon of his day, and he practiced using it and became very good at hitting his target. And this tells me something extremely important, if you're going to have a weapon for self-defense, you better know how to use it, and be willing to use it, or don't have one at all. I've heard more than one story over the years where someone had a gun and when the critical hour came they were unable to pull the trigger and their attacker took it away from them and killed them with it. So, if you have a gun or if you're thinking of purchasing one, know how to use it safely and keep it in a safe and secure place, especially if there are children or someone in your family that's unstable. We hear all the time lately about children getting into their parent's guns, taking them to school and shooting both teachers and classmates. This is the world we live in today, and we need to be very careful to keep them out of the reach of children and adults that may be of a questionable mentality.

I was listening to the news a few days ago and one of our congressmen said something in response to a term that's used a lot lately by those who want to disarm America, and that term is "gun violence." And the Congressman's response was, "there is no such thing as gun violence, only human violence." And I think that's about right, don't you? Because if the government makes it illegal to own a firearm, then the only ones that will have them are the criminals who don't care about the law. I don't know why they can't figure that out, or is it because they don't want a citizenry who can rise up against governmental tyranny?

There are Capitol police who protect those in the Senate and House of Representatives, and even in their personal lives away from Capitol Hill, but the children in our "gun free school zones" are being slaughtered by deranged people, why is that? Do they think a sign at the entrance of a school building that says "gun free zone" is going to deter a murderer? Rather it seems to me that it's an invitation for someone who wants to do harm to others who are defenseless, but let's not get sidetracked brother Jones.

In **Proverbs 21:31** it says, "The horse is prepared against the day of battle (**prepared is the key word here**); but safety (**or "victory" can also be used here**) but safety, (**or victory**) is of the LORD." This means that if we are going to be ready to defend ourselves or others, we should be trained and prepared to do

so, and then we can know, with God's help, that we have the best chance to be victorious. And I'll give you a couple examples of this in just a minute.

Also, in **Proverbs 25:26** Solomon says, "A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring."

That makes me think of an experience my wife had when she was going to Walla Walla College. Her theology professor was apparently against violence of any kind, and he told his class that if someone broke into his house and tried to rape his wife, he would just get on his knees and pray. Doesn't that sound a lot like the man Solomon wrote about? A righteous man **(or a man who professes to be righteous)** falling down **(these 2 words can also mean to "shake", like someone shaking in their boots)** falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." Maybe a better word for a man like that would be coward, or at least someone who doesn't have much respect for his wife.

And notice what the Spirit of Prophecy has to say about the man's role in the family in **Adventist Home, page 215**. "The Lord has constituted the husband the head of the wife to be her protector." And obviously this doesn't mean to just get on your knees and pray as your wife is being attacked. In fact, this is one of the reasons, besides love, as to why James and Ellen White were married. There were those who would have done Ellen harm did she not have a strong man by her side as they traveled about delivering God's message to a fledgling church.

In **Genesis 14** we have the story of Lot being taken captive, and in **verse 14**, that's **Genesis 14:14** it says, "And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants **(what kind of servants? Trained servants)**, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan."

So, Abram led his trained and equipped army of household servants to rescue Lot, his family, and many innocent people that would have ended up being slaves to a foreign heathen power. And we know, according to **verse 20** that he had God's blessing when he did it, because when he came back home, Melchizedek blessed Abraham and affirmed that it was God who had given him the victory. And doesn't this go along with what we just read in **Proverbs 21:31** where it says God gives victory to those who are trained? You see, just as faith and works go hand in hand when it comes to our salvation, they also go hand in hand when it comes to our physical wellbeing. There's nothing wrong with being capable of protecting yourself and others when an injustice is done, as long as we do nothing to bring it on ourselves. We don't ever want to become hard and callus when it comes to these things, but sometime self-defense is necessary in an evil world.

Notice what it says about Lot's rescue in **Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 134, 135**, "Rich in faith, noble in generosity, unflinching in obedience, and humble in the simplicity of his pilgrim life, Abraham was also wise in diplomacy and brave and skillful in war. . . Seeking, first of all, divine counsel **(that's supremely important)**, Abraham prepared for war. From his own encampment he summoned three hundred and eighteen trained servants, men trained in the fear of God, in the service of their master, and in the practice of arms. Lot and his family, with all the prisoners and their goods, were recovered, and a rich booty fell into the hands of the victors. To Abraham, under God, the triumph was due. The worshiper of Jehovah had not only rendered a great service to the country, but had proved himself a man of valor **(or a hero)**. It was seen that righteousness is not cowardice, and that Abraham's religion made him courageous in maintaining the right and defending the oppressed."

There are Christians today who would say that to own guns and use them in self-defense or for defending the oppressed is a lack of faith; that we should just trust God to take care of us, and to those individuals I would say that Abraham, according to **Galatians 3:9**, is called what? Remember? The father of the faithful, and Abraham certainly did not have the attitude that he should be passive when it came to protecting those of his own household and even those not of his household, because we just read that he did a great service to the country he lived in.

For our morning devotions, Cindy and I have been reading in **1 Samuel**, and in **chapter 11:1-4** we have the story of King Nahash of Ammon who attacked Jabesh-Gilead, threatening to gouge out the right

eye of every man in Israel. And what was king Saul supposed to do about it? Just get on his knees and pray about it like Cindy's theology professor? Or maybe Saul should just tell them to turn the other cheek like Jesus said, and we'll talk about what Jesus meant by that in a minute. Should he have sent a message to the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead saying, "just offer your enemy your left eyes also, and we'll stay here and pray for you?" No, that's not what he did at all! In **1 Samuel 11:6** it says, "the Spirit of God came upon Saul", and he responded with military force and saved the people of Jabesh-Gilead.

Another story Cindy and I just read in **1 Samuel 23** is yet another example of David, under God's command, went he went and saved the people of Keilah, which was a small city in the land of Judah, and I'd like to read that in **1 Samuel 23:1-5**, "Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors. Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Then David enquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter."

So, David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. Why? Because they were innocent and vulnerable, and God told him to do it. And notice also that David had to cooperate with God in this battle. What if David would have said, "you know Lord, I'd rather just stay here and let you do it for me, I know you can do it without my feeble efforts, so why don't you just go down there and take care of the situation." What do you suppose would have happened if David had had an attitude like that? Seems obvious, doesn't it? David would have been disobedient, and God does not bless disobedience.

Another example was when Nehemiah and his people were under threat of attack while rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, remember that story? Turn with me to **Nehemiah 4:9**. Nehemiah writes, "we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night." And I think this is another important point. We can't know when we might be attacked or have our house broken into, can we? So, it's important to have that close relationship with God on a daily basis and ask for His protection through the day, and also that we might be prepared, no matter what we might encounter.

Nehemiah said, "we made our prayer unto our God (**first**) and set a watch against them day and night." Notice, like David, Nehemiah didn't just sit back and do nothing believing that God would take care of him and his people. They set a watch against the enemy day and night. Now skip down to **Verses 13-18** "Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons (**these are sleeveless coats mail or body armour**); and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded (**or carried building materials**), everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, everyone had his sword girded by his side, and so builded."

You've probably heard of the term "peace through strength", I think that term was coined by President Ronald Reagan, and that's exactly what happened in this case. When Israel's enemy heard that they had weapons and were ready to fight, they backed off, and the walls of Jerusalem got finished. And so, in cases such as this, weapons and a show of force can be a sufficient deterrent without having to physically engage that enemy.

We hear much today about nuclear war between Russia and the United States, or China and the United States, don't we? But the reason it hasn't happened is because all three Nations know that there would

be mutual destruction should one decide to push the red button, and no one would be the winner. Besides, do you know what it says in **Genesis 8:22**? This is one verse we should commit to memory, because it's very comforting to know. **Genesis 8:22.** God says, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." I don't know about you, but I find great comfort in this inspired statement. Also, there are many prophecies that would never be fulfilled should mankind destroy itself. So, there may be a lot of saber rattling among the nations, there always has been, but God is ultimately in control, and this earth will come to an end when and how God in His foreknowledge has already told us.

Then there's every little girl's favorite story, the story of Queen Esther. If you remember the story, the Jews were about to come under attack as a result of Haman's hatred of Mordecai not showing him the respect he thought he was owed. Under the instruction of the Queen her people prayed, fasted, and finally, with the permission of the King, were allowed to defend themselves, and they destroyed all who came against them. And so, once again, God blessed this act of self-defense against those who were inspired by their religious hatred of God's people. We could go on and on with Old Testament stories, but let's move on now to the New Testament.

Earlier I mentioned Christ's statement about "turning the other cheek?" So, what does that mean? After all, Jesus was the God of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, and so we should see some kind of consistency between the two, don't you think? I believe many Christians today have a wrong conception of God, thinking that the God of the Old Testament was mean and exacting and more likely to kill you if you didn't obey, but Jesus in the New Testament is kind and loving and wouldn't hurt a flea. But the Bible says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that He does not change.

So, let's see if we can figure this out. Let's notice exactly what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:38, 39.** "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil (**according to the context, this has to do with not taking revenge, because elsewhere in the Bible it's very clear that we are to resist the evil**): but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

First of all, even in the Old Testament the council was not to try to get one better in a fight. Do you know what I mean? If someone knocks one of your teeth out or pokes one of your eyes out, don't knock two of theirs out, because that's usually what happens as fights escalate, isn't it? "You do this to me, and I'll do worse to you." No, that's not the way we're supposed to do.

Now, a slap on the cheek may be humiliating, but it's not life-threatening, is it? In other words, we are to bear patiently with humiliation and ridicule and attacks upon our reputation and character and the like. Self-defense from deadly force wasn't being addressed by Jesus when He said, "turn the other cheek." Defending ourselves or others from someone intent on deadly force, or in situations like rape or child abuse, is quite different than being smacked on the cheek. When Jesus said "turn the other cheek" it had to do with not being revengeful and retaliating, especially when being persecuted for the truth's sake. **1 Peter 3:14** says, "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye."

I remember very clearly the day I quit my job of several years because I discovered from the Spirit of Prophecy that it was wrong to support a labor union. I was called stupid and foolish and things I can't repeat by my co-workers as I walked out of my shop for the last time that day. Some of my former workers behind me were hooting and hollering and using all kinds of language and epithets, but the people in front of me in the next department as I passed by saw me smiling with a very peaceful and genuinely happy look on my face and they couldn't figure it out. What was I doing? I was suffering for righteousness' sake, and I was happy about it, I really was. But boy did I hear about it from my local pastor that next Sabbath when he found out what I had done, because even he thought I had done the wrong thing.

You see, nearly all the working men in my church at that time worked in places that required you to pay union dues, and he said, "What would happen if all the men in the church did what you did?" He

was probably afraid he wouldn't receive a paycheck. And I said, "where's your faith? If all of God's people would simply do what God plainly says to do, we would've all been in heaven by now", and that pretty much ended the conversation. However, after that little run-in I started thinking more seriously about where my church was headed, and I discovered many more areas where inspired council was not being followed, and it hasn't gotten any better in the years since, unfortunately.

Now, I don't know if there are any Seventh-day Adventists within the hearing of my voice who support a labor union, but if there is I want to read just one short statement from *Selected Messages, book 2, page 143* before we move on, and then you can make up your own mind about how serious it is to pay union dues. "Unions are one of the signs of the last days. Men are binding up in bundles ready to be burned. They may be church members, but while they belong to these unions, they cannot possibly keep the commandments of God; for to belong to these unions means to disregard the entire Decalogue." Pretty serious, wouldn't you agree? But I'll leave it right there for now.

Remember what Jesus said to Peter when he cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant? In **Matthew 26:52** He said, "put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." It's important that we understand the context here, because many have used this verse to say that if we take up weapons, even in self-defense, we will be killed in the same manner, but that's not it at all. Notice, Peter wasn't told to throw his sword down or get rid of it, was he? He was told to put it back in its place. Why? Because we are not to take up arms when officers of the law are present. The Chief priest and the elders of the people sent a delegation with Judas, and they were accompanied by law enforcement in the form of Roman soldiers. You can read that in *Signs of the Times, December 9, 1897, paragraph 10*. And so, when it comes to the civil authorities we are to be nonresistant and noncombative, but the sword can remain in its place for purposes of self-defense. In fact, in **Luke 22:35-38**, just before this incident with Peter took place, Jesus was sending His disciples on a new mission, and He told them to go sell their coat and buy a sword, because evidently they would need one to either defend themselves, or for purposes of showing peace through strength.

Also, if Jesus meant that everyone was included in His statement, then He was condemning every police officer and soldier who carries a weapon, and that doesn't make sense, because in **Romans 13** God calls these kind of authorities "ministers of God" who execute wrath on evildoers, and that they don't carry the sword in vain. And yes, I know that some of these authorities are themselves evildoers, but for the most part I believe they are people trying to do the right thing. A few of them can give law enforcement a bad name, but my personal belief is that they are the few. And so, there is a legitimate use of the sword and an illegitimate use of the sword, but no command to get rid of it in cases of self-defense when law enforcement is not there.

Now, the time may come when police officers will come for you because you refuse to go along with something that's directly opposed to God's word, and if you take up arms against them, I guarantee you will lose, and I believe that's what Jesus meant when He said, "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." In cases such as this we are not to resist but allow ourselves to be taken into custody and be able to witness for the truth in court, and even if we lose the case, that's alright, because the truth will have been spoken and God's promise is that His word will not return unto Him void.

According to Bible prophecy we are to expect things like this to happen very soon now, because in **Isaiah 59:14, 15** it says, "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." These words apply to these last days according to *Christ's Object Lessons, page 170*, and surely these verses are being fulfilled today as we see what's going on in the judicial system in this once great nation of ours. And it's not just America, is it? No, it's happening all around the world, and unfortunately it's only going to get worse. It's only going to get better, much better, when we take our flight to the Holy City.

Before we leave the Scriptures and go to the Spirit of Prophecy, I want to address something that some are using to show that Christians should not own guns. There are several stories in the Bible that do

say that God's people were not to try to fight the enemy or try to defend themselves, such as when God destroyed the Egyptians that pursued Israel and were all drowned in the Red Sea. There are other examples when God used hornets to drive out the enemy or an angel that came down and destroyed many thousands of the enemy of God's people, but is that supposed to negate all the other stories where God expressly told Israel to fight? If that's so, then we make God the author of confusion.

The truth is, Israel needed some faith-based experiences at times when they were to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, and at other times they needed to cooperate with God with the understanding that they could not just sit back and do nothing in order to inherit the land of Canaan. And this is true with us as well if we plan on inheriting the heavenly Canaan. There are spiritual lessons we can learn from these various stories, but to say that we are never to defend ourselves or others because God chose at times to do the physical battling for Israel while they stood by and watched, and use that to say we shouldn't bear arms is not right. We're supposed to rightly divide the word of truth and not just pick and choose those passages of Scripture that might support our own views. And so, I hope I've given you a balanced view of these things this morning, at least that has been my intent. And please, I'm not telling you to go out and buy a gun, but for those of you who already have one or have been thinking about these things, we should know what God thinks about it, and that's my purpose for sharing these things.

Arthur White, Ellen White's grandson, wrote a book titled "**Woman of Vision**", and on **page 427** he says the following, "At the close of Ellen White's devotional message on the second Sunday morning of the session (**that's the General Conference Session**), as she was stepping down from the platform, a man rushed forward and attempted to assault her. The man was Helge Nelson, who claimed to have the prophetic gift, and two years earlier had sought repeatedly for an opportunity to speak publicly at the General Conference. Of his attempted attack on Mrs. White this Sunday morning, a newspaper reported: "The venerable exhorter staggered against the pulpit platform steps and tottered feebly as she was grasped by a number of men who were close by, as the hand of her attacker descended upon the unsuspecting woman. Quickly, amid the scene of much commotion, "Angel Nelson" [**the title assumed by her attacker**] was hustled out of the church by some stout-armed elders. While others attended the stricken woman, Alonzo T. Jones, president of the California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, summoned the police and Nelson was hustled off to the city prison by Patrolman Flynn and charged with battery. . . Mrs. White regained her composure shortly, and happily received the congratulations of her friends that the assault had not caused more serious trouble." I'm glad those strong-armed men took physical action and didn't just kneel down and pray, aren't you? They had every right to do what was necessary to control the situation, and they did, and would have done more had it been necessary.

At another time when Ellen White's son Edson was on his mission in the south to help the blacks, there were those who tried to stop the work. In the **EGW biography, volume 5, page 62** it says, "a mob of twenty-five men on horseback came to the school (that's the school that Edson helped to establish), and sent the white teacher, one of Edson's men, out of town 'on a rail,' nailed the doors and windows shut on the school building and burned all the books, maps, and charts in the schoolyard. Then they found one of the leading black believers in the area by the name of N. W. Olvin, thrashed him with a buggy whip and stopped only when commanded to do so by a white man who brandished a revolver." So you see, sometimes that's what it takes to stop an assault, because the next step probably would have been a lynching. That's the kind of thing that happened in those days to black people who only wanted to learn how to read and write. Education for the blacks was what the white slave holders feared most, because it's much more difficult to control someone who is not ignorant. Knowledge is power, and that's still a true saying, especially when it comes to biblical knowledge.

At another time when weapons were involved Ellen White didn't speak negatively at all about a Seventh-day Adventist man using firearms to gain back stolen animals. In **Manuscript Releases, volume 3, page 157** she writes the following, "This morning we designed to go to Central City, about twelve miles. We purposed to take dinner on the way by the roadside. As we were preparing to start, the horses were found missing. Yesterday eve two hundred Indians passed through. Five horses of Mr. Walling's were missing; also his cow. It was thought the Indians might have stolen the horses. Mr.

Walling threw off his coat, armed himself with two revolvers and a bowie knife, and in company with one of his men started on horseback to find the horses. . . About two o'clock Mr. Walling came back, having found his horses and cow. He had no occasion to use his firearms, for which we were thankful."

Notice, Ellen White didn't say, "brother Walling, what are you doing? Put those guns and knife away and just trust in the Lord." Trust in the Lord yes, but it sounds like Mr. Walling was trained for battle and God gave the victory just like what happened to Abraham, to David, and to Nehemiah. We're not told any more detail about how he returned with his animals, but I got a feeling when whoever took them saw that he was armed, they decided not to put up a fight, and perhaps he later notified the authorities, but we're not told.

In **Letter 20a, 1879**, written to her son Willie and his wife Mary, Ellen White wrote the following while traveling through Oklahoma, "It seemed very lonesome journeying in the thick forest. We thought what might be if robbers or horse thieves—Indians or white men—should molest us, but we had a vigilant watch guarding the animals. . . We have to be very well armed in passing through the Indian territory. We have our wagons brought up in a circle, then our horses are placed within the circle. We have two men to watch. They are relieved every two hours. They carry their guns upon their shoulders. We have less fears from Indians than from white men who employ the Indians to make a stampede among the horses and mules and ponies."

Apparently this kind of thing was a regular occurrence when traveling through the country. So, one might say, "didn't Ellen White trust in God to get them safely through sparsely populated areas where they might be molested? Yes she trusted God to be sure, but she and her crew didn't presume upon God to be their protector without doing everything they could to prepare beforehand should disaster strike.

Also, just think of the Protestant Reformation. If it wasn't for a willingness to fight the papal onslaught by those who accepted the truths taught by such men as Huss, Jerome, Luther, Wycliff, Tyndale, and a host of others, the Protestant Reformation would have never survived. Even before the Protestant Reformation, I remember reading, in *The Great Controversy* I think, about the Waldenses, when they were being pursued by several papists up a mountain trail, and when their pursuers were in just the right spot they pushed a bunch of rocks and boulders that came toppling down on top of them and they were crushed. The Waldenses used the rocks, the only weapons they had, to try to protect themselves and their families and to be able to continue to preserve the Bible and religious freedom.

And so, when you consider all that has happened through the centuries, the right to self-defense is clearly taught through nature, through inspiration, and throughout the history of God's people. There's nothing wrong with using whatever methods are available to stop a predator that is clearly intent on doing harm to yourself or to your loved ones.

Now, all this being said, there are a couple areas where Christians are never to use violence. #1, Catholicism and Islam have and will use violence in an effort to spread their version of the Gospel, which we should never do. Christians can only use persuasion to do that. #2, we should never use violence for personal revenge or hatred, but we do have the right to use arms to defend ourselves, our families, and to stop someone from pursuing another innocent person when under attack.

Bottom line, to permit murder when we could have stopped it is morally wrong. To allow rape when one could have stopped it is morally wrong, and to watch an act of cruelty to children without trying to intervene is morally wrong, because to refuse to stop an evil when we have the ability to do so, is an evil in itself, and a man who won't do what's necessary to protect his wife and children against a violent intruder fails them morally.

In ***The Desire of Ages, page 310*** it says, "It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin." And I would say that if a righteous indignation is founded, then according to what we've already seen, to act in such cases would be justifiable as well.



Unfortunately dear friends, we live in an evil world and sometimes difficult choices are forced upon us, and speaking for myself, I hope and pray that I never have to defend my family, myself, or a neighbor from a violent assault, but if that evil day comes, as a husband and father and friend, I believe it's my responsibility to take all necessary measures to protect the innocent ones that God has entrusted to my care. And I will say this as a disclaimer, because again, the purpose of this study is not to encourage anyone to go out and buy a gun. I have never owned a gun that shoots bullets and I have never even shot one, and I don't intend to buy one, but there are other nonlethal weapons that can be used to stop someone long enough to get away and call the police, and that's what I will do if such a situation ever presents itself.

And by the way, if you live in a rural setting you should truly be thankful that you do, because the larger cities have become a hotbed of crime and violence like never before, and where the prospect of self-defense is much more likely to be needed. When Ellen White said, "out of the cities is my message at this time," she knew exactly what she was talking about, and that message has become even more critical to give heed to today.

Well, our time is gone, but I truly hope that you have gleaned something positive from the information I've shared with you today, and I pray that God will bless you as you think about these things and come to your own convictions about self-defense during these very evil and turbulent times.