

# A READY DEFENSE



**Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

## **THE BRUTALITY OF THE WILD**

As we admire the beauty and majesty of creation, we can derive a romantic view of tranquil peace and harmony. But upon a closer inspection, particularly on the level of species interactions, the brutality of the wild is vividly portrayed in full color, particularly blood red. Psalms 104:21 says, “The young lions roar after their pray and seek their meat.” Veritably, it is dog-eat-dog world; an eat-and-be-eaten existence for nearly all animals. Although this pressure doesn’t evolve a monkey into a man, “survival of the fittest” is certainly an apt description of the violent interactions that take place between animal species in a post-fallen world.

Each day must begin with a renewed will to survive and a vigilance to avoid becoming a meal for another. The lower one’s link on the food chain, the greater the hazards of daily existence. For a chipmunk, life may come to a quick end with the pounce of a fleet-footed fox or with a raptor’s deft dive from the sky. It is no wonder why rodents appear to be nervously over-caffeinated; scurrying their way around, ducking in and out of burrows and brush piles.

In His foreknowledge of the fall which would pit predator against prey, God mercifully designed His creatures with defenses to fend off becoming an easy lunch. There are runners, flyers, swimmers, diggers, and climbers; others rely upon camouflage, mimicry or stealth. Some are even equipped with weaponry: antlers, venom, claws and teeth. A study of the kingdom *Anamalia*, and even kingdom *Plantae*, reveals a diverse armory of defensive mechanisms and weapons.

## **A COAT OF MANY QUILLS**

One fabulous fauna equipped with a divinely designed defense is the porcupine. Porcupines inhabit most of Canada and range southward into the western United States and Mexico. In the eastern US, its range is limited to the northern states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York and into the New England area. It weighs only about 15 to 18 pounds, but some males may top out at 30 pounds. It is brownish-yellow and ambles along on short legs, but is astute at climbing trees with its long, curved claws to obtain its staple diet of the inner bark of spruce, birch and hemlock trees.<sup>1</sup>



But what makes a porcupine a porcupine is his quills! The word porcupine comes from the middle or old French word *porcespin*, derived from the Latin words "porcus" or pig, and "spina" meaning thorns; hence the vernacular name "Quill Pig". The porcupine's scientific name, *Erethizon dorsatum*, can be loosely translated as "the animal with the irritating back." The American Indian Lakota tribe's name *pahin* means quill.<sup>ii</sup>



These quills are about three inches long, hollow throughout the shaft, and sport piercing barbs on each tip. A porcupine is quilled on all parts of its body except its stomach, and is most armored with these piercing projections on the back and tail... up to 30,000 pointed projections per porcupine!

The quills lie flat and almost unnoticed until the porcupine is threatened. Upon encountering an aggressor, the quills leap to attention as the porcupine turns its back and lashes out its tail at the threat. While the quills do not shoot out like

projectiles, they detach easily upon hitting their aggressor. They readily embed into the animal's skin and body heat makes the barbs expand, working the quill deeper and deeper unless quickly removed. What an incredibly persuasive deterrent designed by God to protect this slow and otherwise vulnerable creature! Truly he is "fearfully and wonderfully made!"<sup>iii</sup>

### **A READY DEFENSE**

Because the porcupine is stout and short legged, it is not a fast mover. In addition, it is nearsighted and its vision is relatively poor. These traits make it vulnerable to attack and most carnivores will not pass up a meal of a porcupine. Because of his inability to quickly evade a predator, it is normally forced into the "fight" rather than "flight" instinct. But its thick, muscular tail, heavily armed with piercingly sharp quills, is ever at the ready. A young or inexperienced predator can receive a face full of quills and may even die of starvation being unable to eat because of a mouthful of embedded spines.

As Christians, God has designed us with a ready defense against aggression. Spiritually speaking, it is a wild, dog-eat-dog world. Sin is ever crouching at the door, lying in ambush to take us.<sup>iv</sup> The devil, prowling around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour<sup>v</sup>, is always scheming to attack the Christian and lure him into temptation. The devil is no coward and pulls no punches. If he had the audacity to attack the Son of God Himself while fasting in the wilderness, will he not also attack us?



And how did Jesus defend Himself? With an axe or a club? No! Each attack was defended with a thrust of the piercing "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."<sup>vi</sup> Like the thrust of a thousand sharp points, Jesus thrice returns Satan's attack with a quick and powerful "*It is written...*"; an even more piercing defense than the prickly porcupine's! "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow..."<sup>vii</sup>

### **A DEFENSE IN ITSELF**

God equipped the porcupine with this ready defense within himself. When attacked, a porcupine doesn't have to run back to his den to get his quills; he already has his protection with him. The only way you can defend yourself against attack and temptation is to know your Bible; to have your defense within yourself. You can't wait until you are attacked to learn how to use your weapon! A soldier that never trains will die when the real battle comes; an athlete that fails to practice will never break a record; a Christian that doesn't know the Word of God won't be a Christian for very long. This God-given defense of the Word of God must be within us and at the ready!

God created the porcupine ready-born with a bristling armor of quills, but we Christians must assimilate and take up the sword of the Spirit and learn to effectively use it. We do this by daily feasting upon the Word of God; meditating and masticating on the holy writ. Being one of the larger members of the rodent family, the porcupine has large, curved, yellow teeth and strong jaws perfectly designed for chewing into its fibrous food of tree bark, twigs and buds. We must sink our teeth into, and feast upon, the Word of God! “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”<sup>viii</sup>



Even children are never too young to begin to learn the Word of God! Allow creation to speak another lesson: porcupettes are born with soft quills, but their quills harden and are ready for defense within just thirty minutes of birth! Jesus was prepared for His great temptation in the wilderness; His defense was already with Him. He put it there Himself as a young boy, “sitting among the doctors in the temple, both hearing them and asking them questions.”<sup>ix</sup> What excuse do we have for not appropriating such a powerful, God-given weapon? There is no successful aggression against a ready defense!

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<sup>i</sup> Alaska Department of Fish and Game

<sup>ii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_American\\_porcupine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_American_porcupine)

<sup>iii</sup> Psalms 139:14

<sup>iv</sup> Genesis 4:7

<sup>v</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

<sup>vi</sup> Ephesians 6:17

<sup>vii</sup> Hebrews 4:12

<sup>viii</sup> Matthew 4:4

<sup>ix</sup> Luke 2:46