**1. The Elements**

In Philippians, Paul said, “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). Paul’s words are trustworthy here because he had experienced this first-hand. As someone who was once a persecutor of Christians, he had realized his real identity and true potential in Christ. His heart had softened and his mission had changed: to serve the cause of the gospel. God truly completed a good work in him.

How has God done a good work in you since becoming a Christian? Chances are you’ve seen yourself change for the better, and chances are you’ve faced a lot of opposition that goes against that good work.

*This world is shooting to kill*

*This world always gotta be stealing my heart*

*This world always tryin’ to rip my family apart*

This world does make it easy to pursue our calling as Christ followers. People will question you, obstacles will arise, temptation will surface, and you might begin to question your calling. It’s a daily battle to fight the elements working against the great work being done in us. Because it’s a battle, we must be prepared to fight. We don’t fight in a literal way, but in a spiritual way. We fight with the truth.

*I’ll fight the elements*

*I got spirit, I got faith*

*I might bend, but I won’t break*

*I’ll fight the elements*

Who does God say you are? What does God say you are capable of?

According to scripture you are:

God’s child: “So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God” (Galatians 4:7).

Forgiven: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

A special possession: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession” (1 Peter 2:9.)

Strong in Christ: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Though the world will tell you otherwise, this is who you are. This is what you’ve been called to. Remember these truths today as you fight the elements that are against you. They might seem strong, but they have no power over the God who made you and made you his.

**2. I just need U**

The first step on the Christian journey is filled with hope. The truth of Christ’s life, death and resurrection changes who we are, how we see the world and how we see others. Joy takes over.

But not long after that first step we realize, just because we are a Christian now does not mean we won’t suffer. In fact, sometimes seeing the truth of Christ can shed light over the parts of our lives we’ve kept hidden, causing more suffering rather than ridding us of it.

But the promise of the Christian life is not that we won’t suffer. It’s that we won’t suffer alone.

*When I’m up, when I’m down*

*When the wolves come around*

*When my feet hit the ground*

*I just need, I just need U*

When David wrote Psalm 23, he was in the midst of suffering. He compared his circumstances to “the valley of the shadow of death,” and yet in the same verse he wrote, “I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

Why does David not fear? Because God is with him. The presence of God in the midst of suffering is what gives us hope, even when the wolves come around, even on our darkest days, even when it feels like we are losing faith.

David felt comfort in the valley of the shadow of death because he was near to God, and we can feel comforted by this too. God came near to us in the person of Jesus Christ, and Jesus remains near to us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ final recorded words to his disciples were a reminder of his presence: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

*And all I know is You’re my only hope*

If Jesus is with us always, then we never have to suffer alone and in that, we always have hope.

No matter what sort of day you are facing, know that you’re not facing it alone. Suffering will always be present in the Christian life, but so is Christ. Even in the valley he is with you always, to the end of the age.

**3. Scars**

When you have a scar, the last thing you want to do is draw attention to it. Typically, we work hard to cover our scars, using make-up or strategically placed clothing. It is the same with our emotional scars. We don’t want to draw attention to the hurt from our past, or our present. We try to cover up our pain with a smile. We don’t share the stories we are ashamed of. We are not proud of our emotional scars, but we all have them.

*We’ve all been there*

*Scars come with livin’*

*You, you’re not alone*

Although our instinct is to cover up our scars, this will never lead us to true healing. How can you heal if you don’t first admit you are sick? Covering up our wounds will ultimately only lead to further hurt and isolation. People can’t fully know us if we don’t show them every part of us.

The gospel is a story that brings hope and healing to the scarred and wounded. When the Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with “sinners and tax collectors,” Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17).

Jesus is the ultimate healer of our wounds. When we show them to him, he does not shrink away in disgust. As he said, he came here for the sick, for the wounded, and his death on the cross resulted in our ultimate healing. “By his wounds we are healed,” said the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 53:5).

*So, lift your head, lift your head*

*Lift your head to where your help comes from*

When we experience the healing of Christ, our posture changes from head hung low, ashamed of our scars, to head held high, looking toward the Father. God does not condemn us because of our scars. He loves us, scars and all. Because of his love, we can do as the Psalmist said and lift up our eyes to where our help comes from, the maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1-2). Amen.

**4. Everything**

*I see You in everything, all day*

In Acts 17, the Apostle Paul travels to Athens where the people have built idols and temples for their gods. Paul tells them, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else…‘For in him we live and move and have our being’” (Acts 17:24-25, 28).

The way Paul describes God in this passage would been novel to the Greeks who gathered to hear him that day. A God who is near, not in some far off place? A God who is present in our everyday lives, not just in a temple or in a shrine?

*And every beat of my heart keeps reminding me*

*I see You in every little thing, all day*

Although we are not ancient Greeks, we tend to limit the presence of God in our lives in the same way. Perhaps we only think about him when we’re at church or in a holy place, but how often do we see him in the world around us?

If it’s true that in him we live and move and have our being, then God is with us all the time. He is around us everywhere. He can be experienced in something as small and unassuming as a flower in the ground or a child’s laugh, and as grand and majestic as a mountain range or the cathedral of Notre Dame.

*No matter where I go, I know Your love is finding me*

*I see You in everything*

What would it look like for you to see God in everything? How could you focus your day on looking for his presence? How would it change the way you interact with God, others and yourself?

Do not limit God to the confines of a temple. For it is in him we live, in him we move and in him we have our being.

**5. Starts With Me**

In our world today, we have good reason to look around us and despair. Racism, a broken system that oppresses others, a cycle of violence and war that seems endless. Discord and hate are the norm. Peace and harmony are distant memories.

Fortunately, Jesus specialized in restoring the broken places inside of us and in the world around us. He didn’t slap a Band Aid on it and hope for the best. He sought and worked for true restoration that led to real reconciliation.

*The healing really can’t begin*

*Without confession, and forgiveness and compassion*

In his sacrifice on the cross and in the healing he performed while on this earth, Jesus set an example for how we can experience relational reconciliation through confession, forgiveness and compassion.

**Confession:** In order to reconcile with someone, you must first confess how you’ve wronged him. As James wrote, “the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:15-16).

**Forgiveness:** After confession, if we are the one who was wronged, we’re instructed to forgive as God forgave us. Paul told the church in Colossae to “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13). Sometimes that forgiveness will lead to a deeper relationship. Sometimes forgiveness is simply for the freedom our own hearts.

**Compassion:** Scripture often describes Jesus has having compassion on others, and his compassion compelled him to heal. In Matthew 20, two blind men asked Jesus to heal them. Matthew says, “Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him” (Matthew 20:34). When we have compassion on others, we will want to heal the broken places and bridge the divide between us, rather than stay on our side of the fence.

Our world is broken—especially our relationships—but we are not helpless. With confession, forgiveness and compassion we can work toward reconciliation, understanding and wholeness. As followers of Christ, that is one of our greatest callings.

*Let’s try to fix the thing that’s been broken*

*We can be free*

*I know that*

*It starts with me*

**6. It’s You**

Although Jesus’ birth is first recorded in the Book of Matthew, his story in scripture begins much earlier. As Paul wrote to the Colossians, “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15-17).

Jesus was with God from the beginning of creation, and he had a very specific purpose to fulfill: to live among us, die for us and be raised from the dead, giving us the hope of resurrected life. Like baking bread without grain or trying to drive a car without an engine, to try and live the Christian life without Christ would be missing the key ingredient in God’s plan for humanity.

*I can’t do this life at all*

*Don’t make no sense without You*

If you are facing a circumstance that feels impossible, could it be because you’re trying to face it without Christ? If you’re in the midst of a broken relationship you think will never be restored, could it be because you haven’t invited in the one who holds all things together? If you are worried about tomorrow, could it be because you haven’t laid your worries down at the feet of the one who is over the visible and invisible?

*It’s You*

*And everything else just falls in line*

*You*

*You will always hold this heart of mine*

Without Christ, we are scattered, uncertain, afraid and anxious. With Christ, everything falls in line. Remember, “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Can you trust him to hold you together today?

**7. Overflow**

One of the most pervasive lies we believe about ourselves is that we are not enough. It’s much easier to believe the opposite and focus on the areas where we fall short. Perhaps you feel like you don’t have enough material possessions, success or prestige. Maybe you feel like you lack confidence or self-assurance. Or you might feel like you are consistently running low on energy, time, grace and peace.

Although we come to the end of ourselves on a daily basis, as God’s children we are always enough, and we always have enough. When we look to him to meet our needs, not only does he fill the voids, but he fills them until they are overflowing with his goodness, love and power.

*You fill my cup up*

*‘Til it overflows*

*And it’s the sweetest love*

*That I’ve ever known*

David talks about this in the Psalms when he writes, “You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:5-6).

The Hebrew word David uses for overflow is *ravayah*, which means “saturation.” God doesn’t give us just enough. He saturates us so that no part of us is dry, and we are overflowing with more than we need.

*It ain’t a glass half-full*

*Or a glass half-empty*

*It’s running over*

*It can’t fit me*

*Down every side to the ground*

*More than enough to go around*

What do you need today? Do you need to know you are enough, no matter your accomplishments or achievements? Do you need more grace for those around you? Do you need to feel loved? Do you need energy to simply get through the day?

God can meet every one of your needs, and then some. Turn to him today, ask him to fill your cup and watch as it overflows.