

People of the Way

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"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers..." (Acts 24:14)

There were many designations for the church in the years immediately following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. They called themselves **brethren** (Acts 1:5), **the church** (Acts 5:11), **disciples** (Acts 6:7), **saints** (Acts 9:32), and **Christians** (Acts 11:26). These descriptions are found in multiple places throughout Acts and all identify this new group of people who follow Jesus Christ. To this day, we still use these designations.

But there was one early "way" of identifying the church that has regrettably fallen out of our normal use. At one time, Christians were known as people who were of **the Way** (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, and 24:22). We follow Jesus, who is the way (John 14:6). We preach the way of salvation (Acts 16:17). We walk in the way of our God (Acts 18:25). We think a certain way. We talk a certain way. We live a certain way. And we die a certain way.

In wanting to compose a new hymn about the church, I chose to write about this oft-forgotten name we used to call ourselves. Keeping true to the image of a way, this hymn progresses along the path of the Christian experience. Think of it as the church together walking the way of Jesus.

At one time we were going our own way (Isaiah 53:6), but we didn't know the way of transgressors was hard (Proverbs 13:15). Oh! But there was a narrow gate that opened to a new way (Matthew 7:13-14). That new way is Jesus (John 14:6).

Upon entering the way of faith, we learned we're not the first ones to have traveled this path. Jesus lived His obedient life on our behalf, and as we walk with Him we look to Him as the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Our past life is over. We press forward for our prize of perfect Christlikeness (Philippians 3:13-14).

But we are not left to our own devices. The Scripture lays out for us the way of obedient faith. Our new walk confesses to all Jesus is our Lord! Regardless of what may happen, in life or death our hope is Christ (Philippians 1:21). Though we may falter, we cannot retreat. We will cross the finish line with Him (Philippians 1:6).

We are the people of the way!