



“My brothers and sisters, whenever you face various trials, consider it all joy.” (James 1:2)

Dear Friends,

I was at an event this week where a Christian colleague gave this example of persecution - a woman approaching him and a colleague in a coffee shop, after they'd been discussing evangelism programs, and saying to them, *“How dare you think that Christians should take over!”*

I was also at an event this week where someone who has spent many years working in Myanmar and neighbouring countries spoke about the experience of Christians, from the Chin, Karen, Lisu, Kachin and Lahu ethnic nationalities of Myanmar; how they had experienced persecution under Aung San Suu Ky's Bamar government and were continuing to experience persecution under the current military government; that their persecution meant not being employed, being driven off their land (so the military can lease it to foreign companies), villages being attacked, women and girls raped, people killed and churches to which people had fled for safety, bombed.

Wikipedia defines 'persecution' as the *“systematic mistreatment of an individual or group by another individual or group... The inflicting of suffering, harassment, imprisonment, internment, fear or pain...”*

It seems to me that my colleague (and he is not alone in this) was claiming persecution much too lightly.

Thinking back to Paul writing to the Thessalonians, his advice (1 Thessalonians 4:10-12) was to be a community characterised by love, by living quietly, by minding your own affairs, working hard and behaving properly to those outside the community of faith. I think it was good advice then and is good advice now. If we are not characterised by love, by working hard at peace-making, by wanting human flourishing across our

society (and across our region) then people should call us to account – and we should not adopt the ridiculous pretence of calling this persecution.

Please remember those who are part of our Christian family, and our wider human family, who are experiencing persecution. Please advocate for them. Please give where you can to help them -<https://baptistworldaid.org.au/appeals/myanmar-humanitarian-response>. Please pray for them. Please, as we reflected last Sunday, give thanks for them! *“For their steadfastness and faith during all their persecutions and the afflictions that they are enduring.”* (2 Thessalonians 1:4)

Grace and peace,

Belinda