Fortitude

Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Jewish Council called the Sanhedrin. The Council condemned Jesus to death. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, although a secret one (John 19:38), and he is noted as being a good and just man (Luke 23:50). Joseph's disagreement with the Council's decision regarding Jesus' death is obvious, as the Scripture records, "He had not consented to their decision and deed" (Luke 23:51). Immediately following the crucifixion of Jesus, Joseph "coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus" (Mark 15:43).

One can easily understand why Joseph had to muster up fortitude and take courage to ask Pilate for Jesus' body. Pilate was likely angry with the clown circus actions and events of the day, thrust upon him by the Jews. He was pressured by the Jewish officials to order Jesus' crucifixion, even though he had pronounced Jesus innocent. Perhaps Pilate had seen enough of Council members on this day and may well have wished not to be bothered any longer. More to the point, Joseph was a secret disciple for fear of the Jews (John 19:38), who were causing all the disruption. Securing the body of Jesus and burying it in his own tomb would certainly expose Joseph to the same contempt from the Jewish leaders that had been so intently directed toward Jesus.

Joseph's fortitude was rewarded with Pilate's permission to take the body of Jesus. Joseph was joined in the burial effort by Nicodemus, another Council member, one who had earlier come to Jesus by night (John 19:39-40). Conceivably, the fortitude Joseph exhibits became contagious. There are times in our lives as Christians that

we too must garner fortitude to have the strength of mind needed to endure pain, difficulty, or adversity, even in the most difficult of situations.

Fortitude is necessary in becoming a follower of Christ. First, we need fortitude to admit we have been wrong. Then, we must have fortitude to confess our faith in Jesus (Romans 10:9-10). That can be especially difficult when family, friends, or our own life entanglements disagree with our new, correct choice (Matthew 10:34-39). It takes fortitude to live as a follower of Jesus: fortitude to say no to the devil; fortitude to speak to others about becoming a Christian; fortitude to stand up to those who teach and support error; fortitude to admonish other Christians who are out of line with the Truth; fortitude to keep on going when times are tough or when we have failed; and the list can go on and on.

Let us each purpose to have godly fortitude in our lives, and let nothing stand between us and our God.