



Type: Magazine Article

Teancum, a True Friend to Liberty

Author(s): Robert Marshall

Source: *The Instructor*, Vol. 100, No. 7 (July 1964), p. 297

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: Fictional story based on account of Teancum in Alma 62.

(A fictional story based on a Book of Mormon episode.)

Teancum, A True Friend to Liberty

by Robert Marshall*

Teancum stood alone, wounded and bound. His remaining time to live could be counted in minutes. He stared at his "Title of Liberty" lying on the ground just inside the walls of the city Moroni. It had been torn from under his breastplate by his Lamanite captors. This small piece of cloth was his most prized possession.

He remembered the day Moroni, his chief captain, had written upon it, "In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children. . . ." (*Alma* 46:12.) Moroni then fastened it upon the end of a pole and called it the "Title of Liberty." This was the flag of the Nephite armies, the standard of liberty that soon afterward was raised on every tower in all the land possessed by the Nephites. This flag had been carried on Teancum's person since the day he stood before Moroni, Lehi, and all the Nephite armies to receive praise for ridding the earth of the wicked Lamanite king, Amalickiah.

Moroni, who had been justly appointed by the chief judges and the vote of the people, said to Teancum, "It is within my power to award you anything in the possession of the Nephite people for your devotion to the cause of freedom. You have but to name your wish."

Teancum faltered because he knew the prize for which he was about to ask might not seem sensible to many who were listening, but there was only one thing he truly desired. "I would have the very first 'Title of Liberty' upon which you wrote by your own hand our code. I realize," he continued, "that this may not sound a worthwhile reward, but until that day seven years ago my life had no great meaning."

There were glistening, unshed tears of pride in the eyes of the great Moroni as he had placed the original "Title of Liberty" in Teancum's hand.

That was five years ago. Now, bound and wounded, Teancum stared at his beloved "Title of Liberty." A movement among the guards caused him to glance up. An unarmed Lamanite soldier was coming toward him. Teancum immediately recognized him as one of the Lamanite captains who had been captured by his armies almost a year ago. He had

been released with over 4,000 other Lamanite captives who swore not to take up arms against the Nephites again.

"I believed you to be a man true to his vows," said Teancum to him, half questioningly.

"I am," came the Lamanite's reply. "Do you think that all Lamanites are without honor, Commander Teancum? I had returned to the land of Nephi to bring my family to live with the people of Ammon, as I vowed, when the evil King Ammoron discovered my actions. He killed my family and reduced me to slavery as his armor bearer. I vowed to rid our countries of his designs, but you saved me the trouble last night with your javelin cast."

The ex-Lamanite captain smiled, and he marveled at the calmness of Teancum in the face of death. "I had best be getting along with my task," he said. "I am sent to bind your wound so that you might live long enough to be executed before the Nephite armies at the dawn of the day. I will do as bidden, but when I leave, Commander, your bonds will also be loosed. I would also ask the Commander's permission to accompany him in his escape?"

"This is a good soldier," reflected Teancum thoughtfully, "but I cannot lead him to his death in this manner." So he said, "I have a more important task for you, my friend. My chief captain, Moroni, must know of Ammoron's departure into the next world. It is very important to the Nephite army. As you leave, take my flag lying yonder in the dust and give it to Moroni with this message: 'Life has no meaning without the "Title of Liberty."' Thus he will know it is from me. In a few moments I will create a diversion, then you must slip past the gates. Do you understand?" he questioned.

The slave nodded assent. He knew the diversion would cost Teancum his life. He also knew that Teancum was ready to give up his life for his code. When he had finished binding the wound, he loosed Teancum's bonds, picked up the "Title of Liberty," and left the area to wait near the gate. Soon there was a disturbance near the gate; and when the guards left, he passed outside the walls.

"Now it came to pass that when Lehi and Moroni knew that Teancum was dead they were exceedingly sorrowful; for behold, he had been a man who had fought valiantly for his country, yea, a true friend to liberty. . . ." (*Alma* 62:37.)

(For Course 9, lesson of September 19, "A Leader Perseveres in Doing Right"; for Course 15, lesson of September 12, "Moroni versus Ammoron"; and of general interest.)

*See "Tests of Leadership," *The Instructor*, February, 1965, for biographical sketch.

Library File Reference: Book of Mormon—Stories.