



**The Chair
Was
Waiting**

Early one morning, Tom, a brother-in-Christ, came down from Atlanta, Georgia, to my home in Statesboro to pick me up. We were to go to Reidsville where the State Prison is located to walk with a young man to the electric chair. He had asked us to do this a month before. One who is to be executed has, by law, the right to ask this.

I first met the young man when I visited the prison to talk to the men there. Tom had told me about the crime that he had committed and that he, Tom, had, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, led him to Christ in Atlanta before he was transferred to Reidsville for execution.

After visiting him that first time, I saw the sweet peace that he had found in Christ. I also saw that he had no fear of what he knew was to be his fate. It was at that time that he asked Tom and I to walk to the chair with him, which was scheduled for about a month later. Tom had walked with several men to the chair before, but this would be my first experience. Without taking time to consider what I was promising, I said that I would.

On that fateful morning we got to the prison a little early and were granted time for a last visit. His faith had not wavered and God had given the man a peace that is beyond the understanding of the natural man.

They had already made the customary preparations by cutting the shirt sleeves and pants legs off so that the electrodes would make perfect contact. The final moment arrived. Two guards came into the cell to escort the condemned man on what is often called the "last mile," but in this case it was only about 25 feet.

Sometimes it takes the combined efforts of six or more husky men to take a man on that last trip. This young brother-in-Christ walked unaided, seemingly as calm as though he was only going to cross the street, and sat down in the chair.

They strapped his arms and legs to the chair, after which the recording clerk asked him if he would like to make any final statement before dying.

He said yes, that he would, and I, along with the other eleven men in the room, heard these words as nearly as I can remember them:

"I am dying because I have broken the law of the State of Georgia, but I want you to know that I have found peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since I have put my faith in Him, I know I'll be leaving here to see Him face to face. So, I beg of you, if any of you do not know Him, then let me tell you this. Don't put it off, for I wish that someone would have told me about Jesus before I committed my crime. If they had, I wouldn't be here now." Then the executioner stepped forward to put the helmet on his head. He was

so nervous and shaken that he couldn't get it straight. I believe God spoke to this man through the testimony he had just heard.

But God spoke to me, also. There are two reasons why I tell this story. First, man can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. When a man has faith in Christ, he can face anything.

Second, it made me realize that it is my duty to tell others of the wonderful Christ that you, too, need to know. When this condemned man said, "I wish someone would have told me about Jesus before I committed this crime," it was like a dagger thrust in my own heart as I realized how often I have failed to witness for Him, as I should. I know that someday I'll meet this brother in Heaven. I'd like to meet you there as well. Won't you settle this question now and say, "Yes, I'll take Jesus as my own personal Saviour."

—John Denmark

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