

Definitions of "Stress":

1. To press; to urge; to distress; to put to difficulties.
2. To subject to stress, pressure, or strain.
3. To subject to phonetic stress; to accent

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

In an article for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution titled "Hassled For The Holidays," Bill Hendrick describes the tensions of the Christmas season. For millions of people, he writes, "going home for the holidays has become an arduous, stress-filled ordeal in which grown men and women unconsciously revert to childish roles, elderly parents bark orders like tyrants, and somebody else . . . makes all the decisions."

Even in the best of families, holiday reunions can be a stressful time when we experience anything but peace. But Galatians 5 says that as new persons in Christ, we have a choice about our thoughts and actions, no matter where we are. If we live according to our sinful nature, the result is "hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions" (v.20). But if the Holy Spirit controls us, we can show "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (vv.22-23). When we get together with our families, these Spirit-filled qualities can be seen as we "through love serve one another".

A lot of people are longing for "peace on earth, goodwill toward men" during this holiday season. Let's take it home with us, and by the power of the Holy Spirit give to family and friends the gift of God's peace.

To escape the distress caused by regret for the past or fear about the future, this is the rule to follow: leave the past to the infinite mercy of God, the future to His good providence; give the present wholly to His love by being faithful to His grace.

When the Holy Spirit fills us,
He will energize our life;
He will help us serve each other,
Spreading peace instead of strife.

To be a peacemaker, let the peace of Christ reign in your heart.