

Matthew 5:5 Discussion

Matthew 5:5 – New Testament Context

Greek Text (Nestle-Aland 28):

Μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

Transliteration:

Makarioi hoi praeis, hoti autoi klēronomēsousin tēn gēn.

Translation:

”Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Key Terms:

- Πραεῖς (praeis): The Greek word ”praeis” translates to ”meek,” ”gentle,” or ”humble.” In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, ”praeis” often renders the Hebrew ‘anawim (עֲנָוִים) meaning the humble, afflicted, or those who are lowly and reliant on God. It does not imply weakness but rather strength under control, humility, and submission to God’s will. The term is used elsewhere in the New Testament, e.g., Matthew 11:29, where Jesus describes Himself as ”meek and lowly in heart” (πραῦς καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ).
- Κληρονομήσουσιν (klēronomēsousin): From klēronomeō, meaning ”to inherit” or ”receive as an inheritance.” In biblical usage, inheritance often refers to God’s promises, such as the land (in the Old Testament) or eternal life and the kingdom of God (in the New Testament; cf. Matthew 25:34, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).
- Τὴν γῆν (tēn gēn): Literally ”the earth” or ”the land.” In context, it echoes the Old Testament promise of the land of Canaan but is spiritualized in the New Testament to refer to the eschatological kingdom of God, the renewed creation (cf. Revelation 21:1).

Context in Matthew: Matthew 5:5 is part of the Beatitudes, a series of blessings pronounced by Jesus on those who embody kingdom values. The ”meek” are those who, in contrast to the proud and self-reliant, humbly depend on God, endure oppression, and trust in His justice. The promise that they ”shall inherit the earth” points to the future fulfillment of God’s kingdom, where the humble will reign with Christ in the new creation (cf. 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 5:10). This verse directly alludes to Psalm 37:11, showing Jesus’ teaching as a fulfillment of Old Testament promises.

Best Translation: The English Standard Version (ESV) and New American Standard Bible (NASB) are among the most accurate for Matthew 5:5, rendering it as:

- **ESV: ”Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”**
- **NASB: ”Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”** Both preserve the literal sense of ”praeis” as ”meek” or ”gentle” and maintain the eschatological promise of inheriting ”the earth.”

Question: Where can we find this statement in another part of the bible?

Answer Psalm 37:11. Read Psalm 37:11-11

2. Psalm 37:11 – Old Testament Background

Hebrew Text (Masoretic Text):

שְׁלֹמֹם עַל־רֹב וְהִתְעַנְנָה יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ וַעֲנָוִים

Transliteration:

Wa’anawim yirshu-’aretz w’hith’ann’gu ‘al-rov shalom.

Translation:

”But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.”

Key Terms:

- אַנָּוִים ('anawim): Translated as "meek" or "humble." In the Psalms, 'anawim refers to the righteous poor, the oppressed who trust in God despite their circumstances (cf. Psalm 25:9, 147:6). It carries a sense of humility, dependence on God, and patience in affliction, contrasting with the wicked who trust in their own power.
- יָרָשׁ (yirshu): From yarash, meaning "to inherit," "possess," or "take possession." In the Old Testament, it often refers to Israel inheriting the Promised Land (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:1, Joshua 1:11).
- אֶרֶץ ('aretz): Literally "land" or "earth." In Psalm 37, it likely refers to the land of Canaan as a symbol of God's covenant blessings, but its use in a broader sense (e.g., Psalm 24:1) allows for a universal, eschatological interpretation.
- שָׁלוֹם (shalom): "Peace" or "wholeness," indicating not just absence of conflict but complete well-being and flourishing under God's rule.

Context in Psalm 37: Psalm 37 is a wisdom psalm contrasting the fate of the wicked and the righteous. **The "meek" ('anawim) are those who trust in the Lord (v. 3), commit their way to Him (v. 5), and wait patiently for His deliverance (v. 7). The promise that they "shall inherit the land" is repeated multiple times (vv. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34), emphasizing God's faithfulness to give His people their covenant inheritance, while the wicked are cut off (v. 9). The "land" symbolizes God's blessing and presence, ultimately pointing to eternal life in His kingdom.**

Best Translation: The ESV and NASB again provide accurate renderings:

- ESV: "But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace."
- NASB: "But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity." These translations capture 'anawim as "meek" or "humble" and 'aretz as "land," preserving the covenantal and eschatological implications.

3. Biblical Synthesis and Meaning

The phrase "the meek shall inherit the earth" in Matthew 5:5 is a direct quotation of Psalm 37:11 from the Septuagint, where 'anawim is translated as praeis. Jesus reinterprets the Old Testament promise in a New Testament context, expanding the "land" ('aretz/gē) from the physical Promised Land to the eschatological kingdom of God, the renewed earth (cf. Isaiah 65:17, Revelation 21:1). The "meek" are those who embody humility, trust in God, and patient endurance, qualities exemplified by Jesus Himself (Matthew 11:29, Philippians 2:5-8).

Key Biblical Themes:

- Humility and Dependence on God: The meek are not self-assertive or aggressive but rely on God's strength and justice (Psalm 37:5-6, Matthew 5:3-10). This aligns with the broader biblical call to humility (e.g., Micah 6:8, James 4:6).
- Inheritance as God's Promise: The concept of inheritance ties to God's covenant with Israel (e.g., Genesis 15:7, Deuteronomy 30:5) and is fulfilled in the New Testament through participation in God's kingdom (Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:29).
- Eschatological Hope: Both Psalm 37 and Matthew 5:5 point to a future where God's justice prevails, the wicked are judged, and the righteous receive their reward (Psalm 37:9-11, Matthew 25:31-34).

Cross-References:

- Numbers 12:3: Moses is described as "very meek" ('anaw), showing meekness as a godly trait.
- Isaiah 61:1-2: The 'anawim receive good news, a passage Jesus applies to Himself (Luke 4:18-21).
- Zephaniah 2:3: The humble ('anawim) are called to seek the Lord for protection.
- 1 Peter 3:4: The "gentle and quiet spirit" reflects the meekness valued in Matthew 5:5.

4. Conclusion

Based on Matthew 5:5 and Psalm 37:11, "the meek shall inherit the earth" means that those who humbly trust in God, endure affliction patiently, and submit to His will shall receive the ultimate covenant blessing: participation in God's eternal kingdom, the renewed earth. The Greek praeis and Hebrew 'anawim emphasize humility and reliance

on God, not weakness. The promise, rooted in the Old Testament land inheritance, is fulfilled in the New Testament's eschatological hope of reigning with Christ. The ESV and NASB provide the most accurate translations, faithfully rendering the original texts' meaning and intent.

What were some challenges in your life that called for meekness or otherwise and did you eventually inherit? Success or failure doesn't matter because it is for learning.

Examples of meekness/gentleness and what were their inheritance

Old Testament Examples of Meekness

• Moses

- Reference: Numbers 12:3; Exodus 3–4; Numbers 20
- Meekness: Numbers 12:3 describes Moses as “more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth” (NIV). Despite his leadership role, he showed meekness by enduring criticism from Miriam and Aaron without retaliation (Numbers 12:1-15) and initially hesitating to accept God's call due to self-doubt (Exodus 3:11; 4:10-12).
- Inheritance: Though Moses' sin at Meribah (Numbers 20:10-12) prevented him from entering the Promised Land, his meek leadership enabled Israel to inherit it, and he was honored by God with a unique relationship (Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 34:10-12). His life reflects the principle of meekness leading to spiritual blessing.
- Connection to Matthew 5:5: Moses' humility allowed God to work through him to secure the “earth” (Canaan) for Israel, fulfilling the promise indirectly.

• David

- Reference: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; 24:1-15; 26:1-25
- Meekness: As a young shepherd, David was humble and overlooked by his family, yet chosen by God (1 Samuel 16:11-13). Later, when pursued by King Saul, David twice spared Saul's life despite having the opportunity to kill him (1 Samuel 24:4-7; 26:7-12), submitting to God's timing rather than seizing power.
- Inheritance: David inherited the throne of Israel and was promised an everlasting dynasty (2 Samuel 7:12-16), a foretaste of the eternal kingdom fulfilled in Christ. His meekness led to earthly and spiritual blessings.
- Connection to Matthew 5:5: David's humility and trust in God resulted in his “inheriting” the land and kingdom.

• Abraham

- Reference: Genesis 13:5-18; **15:1-6**
- Meekness: Abraham showed meekness by allowing Lot to choose the better land when their herdsmen quarreled (Genesis 13:8-11), trusting God's promise. He also humbly accepted God's covenant without demanding proof (Genesis 15:6).
- Inheritance: God promised Abraham the land of Canaan for his descendants (Genesis 13:15; 15:18-21), and his faith made him the father of many nations, with an eternal inheritance (Romans 4:13).
- Connection to Matthew 5:5: Abraham's meek trust in God led to his descendants inheriting the earth, both physically (Canaan) and spiritually (God's kingdom).

New Testament Examples of Meekness

• Jesus Christ

- Reference: Matthew 11:29; John 13:1-17; **Philippians 2:5-8**
- Meekness: Jesus described Himself as “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29, NIV). He exemplified meekness by washing His disciples' feet (John 13:3-5), submitting to God's will in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39), and enduring the cross without retaliation (Philippians 2:8).

- Inheritance: Through His meek obedience, Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God and given authority over all creation (Philippians 2:9-11; Matthew 28:18). He inherits the earth as King of kings (Revelation 11:15), and His followers share in this inheritance (Romans 8:17).
- Connection to Matthew 5:5: As the ultimate example of meekness, Jesus fulfills the promise, inheriting the earth and enabling believers to share in His kingdom.

- **The Apostle Paul**

- Reference: 2 Corinthians 10:1; 1 Corinthians 4:9-13
- Meekness: Paul appealed to the Corinthians “by the humility and gentleness of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1, NIV) and endured persecution, slander, and hardship without seeking vengeance (1 Corinthians 4:11-13). He relied on God’s strength rather than asserting his own authority.
- Inheritance: Paul’s meekness led to spiritual fruit, as his ministry spread the gospel, establishing churches that advanced God’s kingdom (Acts 20:24). He anticipated an eternal inheritance (2 Timothy 4:7-8).
- Connection to Matthew 5:5: Paul’s humble service ensured the spread of the “earth” (God’s kingdom) through the church.

- **The Early Christians**

- Reference: 1 Peter 2:18-23; 3:8-9; Acts 7:54-60
- Meekness: Early Christians, like Stephen, showed meekness by enduring persecution without cursing their enemies. Stephen prayed for his executioners while being stoned (Acts 7:60). Peter encouraged believers to respond to evil with blessing, not cursing (1 Peter 3:9).
- Inheritance: These believers were promised an eternal inheritance in God’s kingdom (1 Peter 1:3-4), and their meek witness helped spread Christianity, “inGENheriting” the earth through the growth of the church.
- Connection to Matthew 5:5: Their humility under suffering aligned with Jesus’ teaching, securing their place in God’s eternal kingdom.

How can Christians embody the meekness described in Matthew 5:5 in a world that often values assertiveness and self-promotion?

- Prompts reflection on applying biblical meekness in modern contexts, such as workplaces, relationships, or social media, with reference to Jesus’ example (Philippians 2:5-8).

What does it mean to “inherit the earth” in our daily lives, given that the promise points to a future eschatological reality?

- Encourages discussion on living with an eternal perspective while engaging with the present world, drawing on passages like Romans 8:17 or Revelation 21:1.

What personal challenges do you face in cultivating the meekness described in Matthew 5:5, and how does the promise of inheriting the earth encourage you to persevere?

- Invites vulnerability and application, connecting personal struggles to the hope of God’s kingdom.

How does the example of Jesus as “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29) inspire or challenge your understanding of what it means to be meek in your relationships and community?

- Encourages Christ-centered reflection on meekness as a relational and communal virtue.