The Excellency of Older English

Vocabulary, Sentence Structure, Style, and Some Miscellaneous Issues

A 12-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

The title for this series of studies is “A Brief Introduction to the Excellency of Older English”. It looks at some of the often overlooked benefits of Older English — not Old English — especially as set before us in our King James Bible, translated during the Golden Age of English, about 1550 to about 1700 AD. The series treats the subject under three major sections: the excellency of Older English vocabulary, in about the first six lessons; sentence structure and style; and, beginning with Lesson 9, a third and final miscellaneous section, which also takes up special phraseology and more vocabulary examples.

www.enjoythebible.org

Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L1	The Golden Age of English; Thee and Ye — Introduction and three sections; examples previewed; John 3:1–9
L2	Ye and Thou; Alway in Distinction to Always — John 3:7 with Luke 18; John 12:7–8; John 14:5–9; Luke 22:31–32; II Corinthians 4:7–11
L3	Alway Is All the Way; Establish and Stablish — II Corinthians 4:10–11; 6:10; Philippians 4:4; Matthew 28:18–20; I Thessalonians 2:16; Romans 1:11; 16:25
L4	Stablish and Throughly; Spirit and Ghost Introduced — I Chronicles 16:30; Psalm 93:1; I and II Thessalonians; James 5:8; I Peter 5:10; II Timothy 3:17; Psalm 51:2
L5	Spirit and Ghost: Ghost Is God’s Host — John 7:37–39; I Corinthians 2:10–13: Pneuma’s Five Meanings
L6	Spirit and Ghost Finished; Profane and Vain Babblings — John 7 and 14; Acts 2 and 16; Psalm 51:11; II Timothy 2:16; Jeremiah 23; Genesis 11; Resources
L7	Structure and Style: Yelling at Them in Print — II Timothy, I Timothy, Titus and Galatians: Verb, Subject, Predicate

Lesson	Core Focus
L8	Retarded Therefore and the Particularizing Definite Article — I Timothy 2:1; II Timothy 1:12; Philemon 17; Hebrews 7:19; Acts 2:36; 26:30
L9	It, Itself and Which: Special Quality and Dignity — Romans 8:14–17, 26–27; Leviticus 18:25; Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35; Philippians 4:13
L10	Which Magnifies; Phraseology Stripped of Its Meaning — John 14:16–26; Matthew 6:9; 23:1–9; I Timothy 4:1–7; Ephesians 3:13–21
L11	"God forbid"; the Small h and Capital H — Romans 6:1–2; Luke 20:1–19; John 10:33–38; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; I Thessalonians 4:8; II Corinthians 7:1
L12	Sanctifying Ministry; Ensample, Emulation, Glory, Foes — Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; I Thessalonians 4:8; I Corinthians 10; Philippians 3:17; Romans 11:11–14; 5:2–3; Psalm 110:1

Lesson Summaries

L1

The Golden Age of English; Thee and Ye *Introduction and three sections; examples previewed; John 3:1–9*

The Excellency of Older English

- Excellency of vocabulary primarily means words with preciseness and flawless accuracy of meaning, not blurred by thinking of words as synonymous; there was keen discrimination between words we call synonymous today

Older English, Not Old English

- By Older English is meant the Golden Age of English, about 1550 to about 1700 AD, when English was at its zenith; the King James Bible was translated within it, more towards the middle

The Decline Phase

- From about 1700 to the present English is in a decline phase — not in the number of speakers, but in usage: its richness is weakened and less understood and appreciated

Three Sections; Examples Previewed

- II Corinthians 4:10–11 has "Always" in verse 10 and "alway" in verse 11; alway means something different from always, and verse 11 is a complement to verse 10, not a repetition

Thee, Thou, Ye and You (John 3)

- Thou was second person singular nominative, thee singular objective, ye plural nominative, you plural objective; in Older English the words themselves make the distinction, where modern "you" risks ambiguity
- In "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7) the Lord talks directly to Nicodemus but not only about him; the Pharisees as a collective group needed to be born again

L2

Ye and Thou; Alway in Distinction to Always *John 3:7 with Luke 18; John 12:7–8; John 14:5–9; Luke 22:31–32; II Corinthians 4:7–11*

Far-Reaching Value (John 3; Luke 18)

- The singular/plural distinction is important not only in its immediate context; it can have a far-reaching effect, even within the parameters of a complete program like Israel's program

Ye in Answer to Judas (John 12:7–8)

- Verses 7–8 use the plural ye where the singular might be expected: answering Judas, the Lord really wants the rest of the disciples to understand

Thomas, Philip and Simon (John 14; Luke 22)

- In Luke 22:31–32 "you" is second person plural, objective case — Satan desired to have all the apostles and sift them all; "I have prayed for thee" puts Simon in a special position, to strengthen the rest

Alway and Always within Two Verses (II Corinthians 4)

- Paul deals with the satanic policy of evil against us today in this dispensation of grace: phase one primarily attacks the message; II Corinthians is concerned with phase two, intimidation tactics, described as the sufferings of Christ

What Always and Alway Mean

- Always has three primary meanings — at all times, at or on every occasion, continually — and context determines which; alway is the shortened form of all the way, expressing duration and progression from beginning to end
- Verse 11 is not simply a restatement of verse 10: verse 10 is a general statement; verse 11 declares the power of God's Word throughout the entire duration and progression of tactics in phase two

L3

Alway Is All the Way; Establish and Stablish *II Corinthians 4:10–11; 6:10; Philippians 4:4; Matthew 28:18–20; I Thessalonians 2:16; Romans 1:11; 16:25*

Alway: All the Way

- Always still primarily carries its meanings — at all times, at or on every occasion, continually; alway, a shortened form of all the way, does not necessarily mean any of these
- Alway describes a prescribed course, or something with identifiable parameters, and progress along it from a beginning to an end

Phase Two as a Course (II Corinthians 4:10–11)

- In verse 10 the dying of the Lord Jesus is a process, so the word used is always; the death in verse 11 is the culminating act of the dying process

Alway in Israel's Program (Matthew 28; I Thessalonians 2)

- Matthew 28 is an example in Israel's program; the dispensation of Gentile grace was still a mystery, not revealed until the Lord Jesus Christ came back from heaven and raised up Saul of Tarsus
- In "lo, I am with you alway" a timeframe is in view — Israel's last days, the 5th installment of the 5th course of punishment — so alway, not always, is the appropriate word

Learn English; Establish and Stablish (Romans)

- Romans 1:11 “to the end ye may be established”: to establish is to set something up, lay a foundation; when you learn the doctrinal truths in Romans, you get yourself established
- “Now to him that is of power to stablish you” (Romans 16:25): after Paul’s warning about phase one, God’s Word is capable of rendering them stable, making them secure, strengthening them; where stablish is used, destabilizing forces are in the context

L4

Stablish and Throughly; Spirit and Ghost Introduced *I Chronicles 16:30; Psalm 93:1; I and II Thessalonians; James 5:8; I Peter 5:10; II Timothy 3:17; Psalm 51:2*

Stablish in Distinction to Establish

- At Romans 16:25 Paul says stablish, not establish — the establishment has taken place; stablish means to render stable, make secure, strengthen, stabilize in the face of destabilizing forces

Stable and Stablished (I Chronicles 16; Psalm 93)

- “the world also shall be stable” (I Chronicles 16:30): David speaks of the world being stable in the future tense — what will happen when the kingdom is established, in the culmination of God’s program with Israel
- Psalm 93:1 speaks of the same issue as an accomplished event: “the world also is stablished” — not set up, but rendered stable; God does His own defining within His own word

Stablished Remnant (Hebrews; James; Peter)

- The establishment doctrines for the members of the remnant of Israel are in Hebrews; Hebrews does for the remnant what Romans does for us today in the dispensation of grace

Thoroughly and Throughly

- A finer line of distinction: “thoroughly” (Exodus 21:19) and “throughly” (II Timothy 3:17) differ by one letter; modern dictionaries call throughly archaic for thoroughly, but books on discriminating synonyms and others note a fine line of discrimination and distinctiveness
- Both speak of completeness, fullness, perfection; thoroughly views things from the outside, throughly from the inside — in Exodus 21:19 the one who caused the injury is on the outside looking in

L5

Spirit and Ghost: Ghost Is God’s Host *John 7:37–39; I Corinthians 2:10–13: Pneuma’s Five Meanings*

John 7:39 in Its Context

- John 7:39 refers to the ministry that would take place with the believing members of the remnant of Israel in the final installment in God’s program with Israel
- Verse 39 calls the third person of the Godhead the Spirit and then, in its latter part, the Holy Ghost — “for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*”; there “for” is a particle of further explanation

Spirit Stresses Function; Ghost Stresses Person

- Both words convey the immaterial nature and entity of the third member of

the Godhead; spirit lays the emphasis on his function, ministry, operation and relationship to God's people, whether in God's program with Israel or with us today in this dispensation of grace

- Ghost stresses his person and personality — he is a living being with identifiable personhood and personality; when that is the dominant thing stressed, the translators called him the Holy Ghost

Ghost Is God's Host

- The etymology of ghost goes back to an Anglo-Saxon root, and guest is a kinship word; as gospel is God's spell — a basic message, not a magic spell — so ghost is God's host

I Corinthians 2:10–13: Spirit and Holy Ghost

- Paul deals with the revelation of the mystery and the provision God has made for us in this dispensation of grace to be mutual counselors together with him in that revelation
- In verses 10–12 he is called the Spirit for his function, operation and ministry concerning this information; verse 13, "which the Holy Ghost teacheth," emphasizes his person as the source of the words

L6

Spirit and Ghost Finished; Profane and Vain Babblings *John 7 and 14; Acts 2 and 16; Psalm 51:11; II Timothy 2:16; Jeremiah 23; Genesis 11; Resources*

Spirit and Ghost Finished: John 7:37–39

- Identified as the Spirit, his function, ministry, operation and relationship are the issue; then the translators, with precise and flawless accuracy of word choice, say "for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*," stressing his person and personality

John 14, Acts 2 and Acts 16

- In verse 26 God's presence is the issue, so he is "the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost"; ghost is the English word conveying God's presence

holy Spirit with a Small h

- Three times, all in our epistles today in the dispensation of grace — twice in Ephesians, once in I Thessalonians (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; I Thessalonians 4:8) — the translators put holy with a small h and Spirit with a capital S

Profane and Vain Babblings (II Timothy 2:16)

- The context is one's not rightly dividing the word of truth — the clear-cut division in God's Word between his two programs; Paul is talking about clearly identifiable Bible teachers who don't rightly divide
- In Jeremiah 23, when God says something is profane, it's because it comes from someone who is profane — someone who claims to be a spokesman for God and is not; in Older English a profane person is a counterfeit spokesman for God
- Those handling the Bible without rightly dividing it are not God's minister or God's Bible teacher — they are profane; there are no prophets and no visions in this dispensation of grace

Babblings from Babel (Genesis 11)

- The first definition of babblings is not prattle or gibberish but Genesis 11, where the LORD did "confound the language of all the earth": babblings means inarticulate speech of a foreign or unknown tongue

L7

Structure and Style: Yelling at Them in Print *II Timothy, I Timothy, Titus and Galatians: Verb, Subject, Predicate*

Structure and Style Defined

- Structure is the order or placement of words in a sentence designed to communicate something in addition to what the words themselves communicate

Older English Flexibility

- Today we seldom vary from subject-verb-predicate; in the Golden Age of English, generally from about 1550 to 1700, 1750, it still dominated, but there was more flexibility
- Punctuation and variations of typeface have largely taken over that role; variation of sentence structure used to be the more common way in written English to convey the writer's emotion, fervency and intensity
- This is more prevalent in the epistles, especially Paul's to us today in this dispensation of grace, than in narrative sections; it is not always anger — praise and rejoicing also come across

II Timothy 3:14; 4:5, 15

- "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned": introduced by the adversative conjunction but, the subject comes after the verb — verb, subject, predicate
- With Alexander the coppersmith coming after Timothy next, Paul writes "Of whom be thou ware also"; with the verb before the subject the stress is there — like a red flag going up, saying urgency

Galatians — Paul's Voice Comes Across

- Structure and style show there are times Paul is yelling at them in print; he realized that when he wrote his voice came across — "I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice" (4:20)

L8

Retarded Therefore and the Particularizing Definite Article *I Timothy 2:1; II Timothy 1:12; Philemon 17; Hebrews 7:19; Acts 2:36; 26:30*

The Coordinating Conjunction Therefore

- Therefore coordinates sentences and indicates a result, a conclusion, or an inference drawn from what has been said before; its most common place is the beginning of the sentence, as in Hebrews 2:1, a conclusion for the remnant of Israel
- In Older English, without losing that capacity, therefore was commonly delayed and retarded, permitting another important statement to be included within the concluding results

Third Place — Paul's Authority

- In "I exhort therefore" (I Timothy 2:1) and "I will therefore" (2:8; 5:14), therefore is placed third; what is stated before it is given weight, and the authority for the conclusion is emphasized
- In all three, what comes first is Paul's authority: I Timothy 1 deals with it in this dispensation of grace — he is the Apostle of the Gentiles and speaks for God like Moses did with Israel

Style — For the Which Cause

- Romans 15:22 and II Corinthians 4:16 say "For which cause"; II Timothy 1:12

says “For the which cause” — the added definite article is doing something, and in Older English you would have known what it meant

- Inserted especially before the relative pronoun which, it makes sure you understand the particular which in the context is the reason — overweighting one matter of context above another

Same and Thus

- In Acts 2:36, where Peter preaches at Pentecost, “that same Jesus” is emphatic — an unavoidable identification linking his audience with crucifying the Messiah; today we pretty much say the very or this particular

L9

It, Itself and Which: Special Quality and Dignity *Romans 8:14–17, 26–27; Leviticus 18:25; Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35; Philippians 4:13*

“the Spirit itself” (Romans 8:26–27)

- The translators knew perfectly well that the Spirit is a himself — in verse 27 they identify him as a him — so “the Spirit itself” in verse 26 was no mistake or oversight
- Every English grammar book in Keith’s office cites the issue: it and itself are often used to denote a special quality, state, rank, or dignity to the person being spoken about or to the situation being described

The Specialness Is in the Situation: Sonship

- The specialness is in the situation — it is not that the Holy Spirit isn’t special Himself; in verses 14 and 15 Paul has already dealt with God dealing with us in this dispensation of grace as sons and not as children
- The Holy Ghost’s relationship with our spirit is very special, different from His relationship even with saved people in God’s program with Israel, when God dealt with them as children and not as sons

“Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13)

- Older English also provided for this by the relative pronoun which instead of who or whom; using which of Christ does not lower Him — in the excellency of Older English it does the exact opposite
- Which can be used for who or whom when the writer desires to magnify the state, dignity, rank, or special quality of the one spoken about — and even when it is a poor rank or a dreadful state
- Paul wants magnified the excellency of the power of God’s Word operating in our inner man — a high privilege of God’s grace for members of the Body of Christ dealt with as sons in this dispensation of grace

L10

Which Magnifies; Phraseology Stripped of Its Meaning *John 14:16–26; Matthew 6:9; 23:1–9; I Timothy 4:1–7; Ephesians 3:13–21*

Which of the Holy Ghost (John 14)

- A further aspect of special quality and dignity is given — He is the Comforter, and the eleven are to acknowledge that — so verse 26 reads “the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name”

“Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9; 23:8–9)

- One of the grammar books cites Matthew 6:9: as the Lord teaches the remnant of Israel how to pray, putting which instead of who magnifies

something very special about the Father — their spiritual Father is in heaven

Phraseology

- Phraseology is a group of words, a phrase, an expression that conveys in its collective sense a particular meaning; two examples are taken from our epistles, phrases we have failed to allow to retain the meaning they used to have

"refuse profane and old wives' fables" (I Timothy 4)

- For Robert Louis Stevenson the old wives' stories were stories of the miraculous — miracles, supernatural things, divine intervention; that is what old wives' fables refers to in I Timothy 4:7
- In verses 1–6 the Holy Spirit expressly describes a trend in the satanic policy of evil as the dispensation of grace proceeds: getting members of the Body of Christ back into Israel's program
- Forbidding to marry and abstaining from meats can be found in the scriptures, but not in the scriptures about and for this dispensation of grace

"breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Ephesians 3:18)

- Ephesians 3:18 speaks of comprehending the full affairs of God's business in the universe, possible with the revelation of the mystery of God's will — made mutual counselors together with Him, as in I Corinthians 2

L11

"God forbid"; the Small h and Capital H *Romans 6:1–2; Luke 20:1–19; John 10:33–38; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; I Thessalonians 4:8; II Corinthians 7:1*

"God forbid": the Authority Factor

- The translators are criticized for taking too much liberty with "God forbid", since the word God does not occur in the Greek expression; the answer is that the Greek takes into account the authority of the individual who is saying it
- When that authority is God Himself speaking through one of His apostles or prophets, the only appropriate rendering is "God forbid"; not rendering it so signifies an appreciation that may not be what it ought to be

God Prohibiting (Romans 6:1–2)

- In view of who Paul is and whose words he communicates, it is God telling you He forbids you to think that — not Paul's opinion; His doctrine will not allow it
- Paul speaks and writes for God in this dispensation of grace; what he writes is not just his own ideas but from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ — "Christ speaking in me" (II Corinthians 13:3)

Small h "holy Spirit"

- Three occurrences, all in our epistles for this dispensation of grace — Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30 and I Thessalonians 4:8 — have capital S for Spirit, small h for holy; any capitalization gives the idea of a proper noun and a title
- In the three, holy was not simply a title identifier of the third member of the Godhead, so the translators did not capitalize the H and translated by spirit, not ghost: the holiness issue was a ministry issue

The Spirit's Holy, Sanctifying Ministry

- John 17 is Israel's program, but it is an interdispensational truth: as with the remnant of Israel and the apostles, a similar holy sanctifying ministry takes

place with us, produced by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God

L12

Sanctifying Ministry; Ensample, Emulation, Glory, Foes

Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; I Thessalonians 4:8; I Corinthians 10; Philippians 3:17; Romans 11:11–14; 5:2–3; Psalm 110:1

The Small h: a Sanctifying Ministry

- In Ephesians 1:13, 4:30 and I Thessalonians 4:8 the translators rendered by Spirit, not Ghost, and put a small h; capital H is a proper noun or title issue, but here the reference is to a sanctifying ministry the Spirit of God has with us

Example and Ensample (I Corinthians 10:6, 11)

- Today ensample is thought to be simply another way of spelling example, yet in one context, of the same people and both plural, the translators used “examples” in verse 6 and “ensamples” in verse 11
- They are synonyms — a similar meaning with shades of difference — but they do not equal the exact same thing; an ensample is a species, a specific kind, of example

Provoke to Jealousy, Provoke to Emulation (Romans 11)

- The same Greek verb is rendered “provoke them to jealousy” in verse 11 and “provoke to emulation” in verse 14; there is bad and good jealousy, bad and good emulation, so context is extremely important

Rejoice and Glory (Romans 5:2–3)

- “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (verse 2) and “we glory in tribulations also” (verse 3) come from the same Greek verb; the variation is because tribulations take into account a public situation

Homework: Enemies and Foes (Psalm 110:1)

- Psalm 110:1, Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:43 and Hebrews 1:13 have enemies; Acts 2:35 alone has “thy foes thy footstool” — and in Hebrews 1:13 the translators recognized foes would be inappropriate
- All foes are enemies, but not all enemies are foes; something very special in God’s program with Israel made those enemies foes in Acts 2 — this is left as homework, and the answer is not given

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Thee and Thou vs. Ye and You

Thou is for second person singular nominative, thee for second person singular objective, ye for second person plural nominative, and you only in the objective case of the second person plural. Modern English uses you for both singular and plural, which, unless the context makes it evident, creates a potential for ambiguity; in Older English the words themselves make the distinction.

Alway vs. Always

The word always has three primary meanings — at all times, at or on every occasion, continually — and context determines which. Alway is a shortened form of the expression all the way; it describes progress along a prescribed course, or within identifiable parameters, from a beginning to an end.

Stablish vs. Establish

To establish something means to set something up, to lay a foundation — an initial act that needs to take place for subsequent ones to follow. Stablish means to render stable, make secure, strengthen, stabilize in the face of destabilizing forces; whenever stablish is used, the context has destabilizing forces, especially contrary doctrines.

Thoroughly vs. Throughly

Both words speak of completeness, fullness, perfection, a lack of deficiency or shortcoming; the fine line is that thoroughly views things from the outside and throughly from the inside. Thoroughly could leave the inside excluded; throughly demands that the inside be dealt with first.

Holy Ghost vs. Holy Spirit

Both spirit and ghost convey the immaterial nature and entity of the third member of the Godhead. Spirit lays the emphasis on his function, ministry, operation and relationship to God's people; ghost stresses his person and personality.

It, Itself and Which: Special Quality, State, Rank, or Dignity

According to the grammar books, it and itself are often used to denote a special quality, state, rank, or dignity to the person spoken about or the situation described. Which can be used in place of who or whom when the writer desires to magnify the state, dignity, rank, or special quality of the individual spoken about, as in "Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13); the translators do not substitute it on every occasion.

Key Scripture References

Matthew 6:9	"Our Father which art in heaven": which instead of who magnifies something very special about the Father; taught to the remnant of Israel
Matthew 28:20	"lo, I am with you alway": a timeframe is in view — Israel's last days, the fifth installment of the fifth course of punishment
John 3:7	"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again": thee is Nicodemus; ye is the Pharisees collectively
John 7:39	The Spirit, for his function; then, with precise and flawless accuracy of word choice, "for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*", stressing his person
John 14:26	"the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost": Holy Ghost because God's

	presence is the issue; the which comes from the new special quality added to him as the Comforter
Romans 6:1–2	“God forbid”: in view of who Paul is and whose words he communicates, God prohibiting the thought — not just a wish
Romans 8:26–27	“the Spirit itself”, though verse 27 identifies him as a him: the specialness is in the situation — the dignity of sonship
Romans 11:11–14	God provokes Israel “to jealousy” (verse 11); Paul provokes “to emulation” by magnifying his office (verses 13–14)
Romans 16:25	“stablish”, not establish: the establishment has taken place; through those same doctrines God is of power to stabilize them
I Corinthians 10:6, 11	“examples” in verse 6, “ensamples” in verse 11 — same context, both plural; ensample stresses the solemn nature: take it to heart
II Corinthians 4:10–11	“Always” in verse 10 for the dying process; “alway” in verse 11: all the way delivered unto death
Ephesians 1:13; 4:30	“that holy Spirit of promise”; “the holy Spirit of God”: small h — the Spirit’s sanctifying ministry to us, not just a title
Philippians 4:13	“Christ which strengtheneth me”: which instead of who magnifies what Paul is claiming
I Thessalonians 2:16	“to fill up their sins alway”: all the way, right to the top; always there teaches something contrary to the truth
II Timothy 3:14	“But continue thou”: verb before subject after the adversative conjunction — Paul’s fervency
II Timothy 3:17	“throughly furnished”: from the inside out; thoroughly (Exodus 21:19) views from the outside