

2 Timothy 3:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Analysis

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Paul describes false teachers' victims with tragic irony: "Ever learning" (pantote manthanontas, πάντοτε μανθάνοντα). Present participle indicates continuous action—always learning, constantly seeking, perpetually studying. The adverb pantote (πάντοτε) means at all times, always—their learning never ceases. Yet tragically: "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (kai mēdepote eis epignōsin alētheias elthein dynamenous, καὶ μηδέποτε εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν δυναμένους).

Mēdepote (μηδέποτε) means never, at no time—strong negation contrasting with pantote (always). Epignōsis (ἐπίγνωσις) means full knowledge, recognition, understanding—not mere information but truth grasped and embraced. The verb erchomai (ἔρχομαι) means arrive at, reach—they never arrive at truth despite constant travel toward it. This describes intellectual pride masquerading as humble inquiry: always questioning, never concluding; always seeking, never finding; always learning, never knowing.

The tragedy isn't intellectual limitation but spiritual blindness (2 Corinthians 4:4). Truth requires humility to receive revelation, but pride keeps them perpetually studying without submitting. Modern parallels abound: academics studying theology without believing it; seekers sampling spiritual options without committing; skeptics questioning everything without accepting anything. Endless inquiry without faith never reaches truth.

Historical Context

Greek philosophy prized intellectual inquiry. Sophists and skeptics argued that absolute truth was unattainable, making perpetual questioning a virtue. Some philosophical schools taught that doubt was wisdom's hallmark. This influenced some Christians who adopted perpetual learning as spiritual maturity, never settling into confident belief. Paul rejects this: truth exists, can be known, and must be embraced. The gospel isn't one option among many but exclusive truth demanding response. Contemporary postmodernism echoes ancient skepticism: celebrating questions while rejecting answers, prizing journey while denying destination.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Do you engage Scripture and theology as humble learner seeking to know and obey truth, or as perpetual skeptic always questioning without submitting?
2. In what areas might you be 'ever learning but never arriving'—consuming content without applying truth or making definitive commitments?
3. How can you balance healthy inquiry and growth with confidence in revealed truth that has been definitively grasped?

Interlinear Text

πάντοτε μανθάνοντα καὶ μηδέποτε εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν
Ever **learning** **and** **never** **to** **the knowledge**
G3842 G3129 G2532 G3368 G1519 G1922

ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν δυνάμενα
of the truth **to come** **able**
G225 G2064 G1410

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Hebrews 5:11 (Parallel theme): Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Proverbs 14:6 (Parallel theme): A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

1 Timothy 2:4 (Truth): Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 2:25 (Truth): In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

Matthew 13:11 (Parallel theme): He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

John 5:44 (Parallel theme): How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

Deuteronomy 29:4 (Parallel theme): Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.