

1. Lack of doctrine in the soul causes the low-inventory believer to be unstable. He cannot manage the challenges that will consistently occur in the life of every Christian.
2. This believer is characterized by the “surf of the sea.” Exegesis of the word “surf” in the NASB is important if we are to accurately analyze this illustration.
3. The other major translations—KJV, NIV, and NET choose the word “wave.” We must go the dictionaries for help.
4. The word “surf” is translated by *The Oxford American Dictionary* as “the mass or line of foam formed by waves breaking on a seashore or reef”; by *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary* as “the waves or swell of the sea which breaks upon the shore or upon shoals or rocks”; by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as “The swell of the sea which breaks upon a shore, especially a shallow shore”; and by *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* as “The offshore waters, waves, or wave action between the shoreline and the outermost boundaries of the breakers.”
5. These definitions really do not really define the “waves of the sea” that is indicated by the Greek word for “surf” found in our verse.
6. That word is the noun **κλύδων (klúdōn)** and it is defined in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* as “The raging of the sea; a tempest”; in *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Greek New Testament* as a “wave; i.e., “the surge of the sea” and “the billowing sea”; and in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* as “a succession of waves, rough water.”
7. In addition, we have **κλυδωνίζομαι (kludōnízomai)**, a deponent from *klúdōn* in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, “a surge of the sea; wave. To surge, be tossed in billows” and in *A Greek-English Lexicon* **κλυδασμός (kludasmós)**, “surging of waves.”
8. What’s the point? The illustration James uses does not refer to waves flopping in on the shore as per the word “surf,” but rather the multiple influences that contribute to the instability of ocean waters.

9. In verse six, it is the “one who doubts” that is described as being “driven and tossed by the wind.” These and multiple other factors constantly manipulate the waters, first one influence, then another, and then another.
10. In our research on the oceans we observed a few of the many forces that control, influence, and manipulate the environment so that ocean waters are “driven and tossed.”
11. Waves have “undulations and oscillations that may be chaotic and random” or with “an identifiable wavelength between adjacent crests and with a definite frequency of oscillation.”
12. Without doctrinal recall, a believer is like ocean waves which are pushed in certain directions by wind:
Jonah 1:4 **The Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. (NASB)**
12. Water seeks stability. Our teachers told us as children, “Water seeks its own level.” But, even when the Beaufort scale indicates no wind and ocean waters are calm, other oceanic forces still keep them moving.
13. When wind picks up, waves are created, but gravity still keeps them coming back in search of the mean surface level. Underneath are ocean currents, Coriolis effect, and frictional forces.
14. Winds’ increasing forces are described by the Beaufort scale from calm at less than one mile per hour to hurricane force when exceeding 73 miles per hour. The greater the speed the probability of rain increases.
15. The illustration by James would be played out literally by Paul in c. A.D. 60 when on a trip to Rome he and 275 other passengers and crew were caught in a hurricane that is described in precise detail by Luke in Acts 27:1–28:16.
16. Reading now from Acts 27:1–44 in the NET Bible along with the associated visuals, “Paul and Company Sail for Rome”:

Recitation of Acts 27:1–44, NET Bible.

17. From this account we are able to notice a number of incidences that caused the captain to make decisions against Paul's advice leading to a series of dire circumstances including loss of the ship.
18. Several weather forces dictated the course of the voyage. The first was the decision to sail due south "under the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us" (27:4).
19. The lee side of an island is the one that protects the ship from prevailing winds, in this case from the south, thus they were east and north of the island.
20. After being transferred at Myra to a ship bound for Rome, Paul and his fellow sailors embarked with a new crew. Their next weather event was also affected by the wind.
21. At Cnidus [**Κνίδος (Knidos): nī'-dus**], "westerly currents and headwinds" forced the crew to sail due south to the island of Crete where the captain could then turn due west under the protective lee of the island.
22. When at the mercy of the winds and currents of the Mediterranean Sea, it helps to have divine guidance while others make decisions from a position of weakness.
23. Docked at the town of Fair Havens, Paul addressed the captain and ship's occupants warning them against proceeding further on the voyage. Note his recitation from the source of divine guidance:
Acts 27:10 "Men, I observe from past experience this voyage is going to end in disaster and much damage not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." (EXT)
24. Paul's warning was overruled by the captain and the ship's owner. These two men had the rank and authority to make the final decision. The centurion, charged with the duty of presenting Paul to authorities in Rome, agreed.
25. They charted a course for Phoenix, located some 50 miles toward the western end of Crete, and spend the winter there. It was on this short sail that Paul's prophesy began to be fulfilled.

26. Aided by a south wind, the captain charted his course, weighed anchor, and set sail near the coast of Crete. What happened next is described by the NET Bible in **Acts 27:14** Not long after this, a **hurricane-force wind** [τυφωνικός (*tuphōnikós*): **whirlwind**] called the **northeaster** [Εὐροκλύδων (*Euroklúdōn*):⁷ **Euráquilō** (*ū-rak'-wi-lō*)⁸ **a sailor's term**] **blew down from the island.** (NET)
27. Hurricane-force would be in excess of 73 miles per hour. Here is further analysis about this phenomenon:
Sailing along the southern coast of Crete, the ship passed up a winter anchorage at Fair Havens in an attempt to reach what the captain thought was a more desirable port at Phoenix, 50 miles further west. (It was) late fall, and sailing on the Mediterranean in that season became precarious. (pp. 186–87)
Indeed, a “northeaster” wind sprang up, and the ship was driven off course. As it was passing on the east side of the island of Cauda the ship had to be lashed together, and as the storm continued there was considerable danger that the ship would run aground and be wrecked on the sandbars of Syrtis, off north Africa. Instead the ship eventually ran aground on the island of Malta, 60 miles south of Sicily. All 276 passengers were saved, but the ship and its cargo were lost.⁹ (p. 187)
28. The Euráquilō prohibited the ship from being properly guided by sail so it was driven along out of control until the captain was able to move behind the small island of Caúda.
29. Through this entire ordeal, another difficulty was contributing its annoyance to the mounting problems. What the text refers to as the “ship’s boat,” a sort of skiff or dinghy, was being tossed to and fro as it slashed through the surf behind the ship.

⁷ “Εὐροκλύδων, a tempestuous wind occurring on the Mediterranean. It blows from all points and its danger results from the violence and uncertainty of its course” (Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993], 682).

⁸ The Euráquilō is easily explained as a compound of Greek *eúros*, “east wind,” and Latin *áquilō*, “northeast wind,” hence *euráquilō*, “east northeast wind.” This agrees with the experience of navigators in those waters” (Alfred H. Joy, “Euraquilo,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956], 2:1039).

⁹ Carl M. Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 186–87).