**Lesson of Lismore** dkm May 2022
The Northern NSW city of Lismore lies devastated after two major floods within weeks of each other. People had to flee for their lives as their houses were engulfed by floodwaters; thankfully very few perished in these floods. Businesses

 have closed after losing property and stock worth thousands of dollars. A massive clean-up operation is underway, with government help. A ‘Resilience minister’ is overseeing the clean-up.

‘Resilience’ is a popular word among politicians, and in the wider community today. It has become popular since the devastating bushfires of 2019. Resilience simply means to ‘bounce back’ or recover after a setback of some kind. We have always admired people who ‘bounce back’; it is part of our human spirit. But it can become a spirit of defiance against the ‘forces of nature’, and ultimately against God, who rules over his creation.

Our forefathers suffered droughts and floods and bushfires. My grandmother lived on the banks of the Manning River. On one door frame of her house was marked the heights of various floods; I recall 1955 being the biggest. I recall helping her pile furniture up on tables as the flood waters rose. I also recall driving our herd of dairy cows through a neighbour’s property to get drinking water every day during the big drought of 1965. But after the drought we dug more dams on the farm. My grandmother’s house was built higher after some years. Resilience is good, but lessons must be learnt from disasters and setbacks in our lives.

Will the city of Lismore learn any lessons from the devastating floods? There is talk about taking action to move the city to higher ground. It will be very costly, but what are the alternatives? More resilience? Stopping climate change? Decisions must be made about changing direction, about moving the city to a safer place. With respect we ask, what good is a minister for resilience? What is needed is a minister for repentance, a person who will turn this city around and take it out of the dangerous flood zone.

In our pride we can be resilient. We can press on living in the face of danger and destruction. We can say, ‘I was born here and I will die here’. But when pride gives way to humility and to wisdom we will say, ‘I have decided to turn around and move to a safer place’. Such a decision will be costly, but what value do you put on life?

As Jesus drew near the city of Jerusalem he wept over it saying, ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes’ (Luke 19:41-42). Jesus was entering they city to be crucified by its people. Jesus knew this but was not weeping for himself; he was weeping for the people because he knew this city would be destroyed within forty years. He came to this city preaching repentance: ‘Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand’ (Mat 4:17). The people did not listen, and they perished.

The lesson of Lismore is not that it was more wicked than other cities. The lesson for every city in our nation, and for you as a person is, change your ways or you too will perish. You must move to higher ground, as it were, or as Jesus says, build your house on the rock and not on the sand (Mat 7:24-27). Jesus is the Rock, so if your life is not built on him you are in grave danger.

Resilience is good for a while, but eventually you will perish. Repentance on the other hand, the radical decision to turn from your stubborn ways and your sin, and start a new life as a follower of Jesus Christ, is essential if you want the blessing of peace and eternal life.