



# RADICAL HEART SURGERY

'And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.'<sup>1</sup>

It was an unusual clinic letter from the prosthetics department. A patient at the prison where I work had been released and was so appalled at the crime he had committed that he severed his own hand. Clearly, Jesus did not want to be taken literally here, and I doubt my patient had this passage in mind when he mutilated himself. But perhaps we can relate to his awful sense of regret, and the desire to distance ourselves from something we have done or said.

The context of this verse in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount shows that amputation of an offending body part will not achieve cure. The disease is metastatic and has disseminated even from our innermost thoughts. We would need to excise right back to the heart, and then what? Are blind men cured of lust or amputees of envy?

Jesus is not addressing the pre-op ward, but outpatients. He is addressing those who have realised that self-surgery is futile and thankfully unnecessary. He is addressing the cured, those who have already consented to radical heart surgery.<sup>2</sup> They are renewed from the inside out, new creations, and now want to make the most of the new lease of life given to them. They want to live wholeheartedly for the Great Physician.

For reflection: What might we be called to turn away from in order to follow Jesus?

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## references

1. Matthew 5:30
2. Ezekiel 36:26