**Scene XVII (The Same)**

**Summary**

Faustus is spending the final evening of his life with the three scholars. They detect something is wrong. Faustus sighs and seems frightened by something they cannot see. He speaks of eternal death. The scholars question Faustus until he confesses he has "damned both body and soul" by an excess of sin. They counsel him to ask God for mercy, but the doctor says his sins are worse than that of the serpent when it tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. He then confides he has rejected God, blasphemed, and sold his soul to [Lucifer](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/character-analysis/#Lucifer) and [Mephastophilis](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/character-analysis/%22%20%5Cl%20%22Mephastophilis). The scholars are horrified and baffled about how to help Faustus, except to pray. The doctor sends them away for their own safety as the clock strikes eleven.

In despair Faustus implores time to cease so that midnight will never come. He now craves time to repent and save his soul. But even as he reaches for heaven, he can feel hell pulling him down. Faustus calls on Christ and then on Lucifer to spare him. He pleads for the mountains and hills to fall on and hide him. When they do not, he begs his soul to be torn from his body by a violent storm brewing in the clouds so that his soul may ascend to heaven.

The clock strikes eleven thirty. In growing terror Faustus tries to make a deal with God. In the name of Christ, whose death paid for all sins, Faustus pleads that God affix a limit to his punishment in hell. A hundred thousand years is not too long, if at last he will be saved. He then curses the fact he has a soul at all, curses his parents for giving him life, and then, more honestly, curses himself and Lucifer for his fate. The clock strikes twelve. Thunder and lightning erupt, and devils appear. In a panic Faustus renounces magic, crying out he will burn his books. But he is too late, and the devils drag him off to hell.

**Analysis**

The time for Faustus to pay the price for dark knowledge has come. Despite several chances to repent and save his soul, he has stubbornly stayed on the path to damnation. His former mastery of theology—which tells him hell is terrifyingly real—has not served him well. With defiance, he has deceived himself into thinking hell is a fable or not so bad. Now that its existence, with all the horror that it holds, becomes minute by minute more real, Faustus cannot help but confess to someone what he has been up to. The scholars are shocked at the lengths Faustus has gone to for the sake of knowledge. They, too, are men of the Renaissance who deeply value learning, but they would not consider taking the same route that Faustus has. Though they encourage him to repent and promise to pray for his soul, they fearfully leave him as if doubting even God's mercy is enough.

Rather than take the direct path to repentance that the Good Angel and old man have described, Faustus begs time to stop, to give him time to repent. Quoting from the poet Ovid's *Amores*, he cries, "Oh run slowly, slowly, ye horses of the night!" There is verbal irony in this quote. The speaker in the poem lies in the arms of his lover and prays for the slow arrival of dawn so his time with that person will not end. It is a cry of ecstatic love. Faustus is pleading for more time for a different reason. Rather than renouncing magic outright, Faustus seems to beg for more time to make up his mind, enjoy life, or find a loophole in his deal with [Lucifer](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/character-analysis/#Lucifer).

When time fails to slow for him, Faustus reaches body and soul for heaven, but something pulls him down. He finds that he is trapped between salvation and damnation. As a theologian, he understands how deeply he has offended God and the consequences of God's wrath. Once again, he despairs and begs the mountains to fall on and hide him. His plea echoes a Bible passage from the Book of Revelations 6:16–17: "And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of Their wrath has come, and who is able to withstand it?'" In the Bible, the Book of Revelations describes the Apocalypse, the end of the world, during which God destroys evil and evildoers and rewards those who are righteous, or morally worthy, by allowing them to enter a new, divine kingdom.

Next Faustus blames influences beyond his control—namely the stars—for his impending doom. Heavenly bodies were thought to exude an invisible, ethereal substance that affects a person's character and destiny. He implores these heavenly spheres to do what God will not: to free his soul. When nothing changes, he tries to bargain with God, to reduce the length of his time in hell. Cursing the fact that he even has a soul, he fervently wishes that Greek philosopher Pythagoras's theory of the transmigration of souls were true. This is the notion that the soul, after the body dies, moves on to another body. Depending on the quality of that previous life, the soul would begin a new existence in a human, animal, or spirit state.

At the last moment, Faustus vows to burn his books if only God will spare him. This was traditionally considered proof that a magician was abandoning magic. Unfortunately, the promise comes too late. Faustus never does overtly, without excuses or evasion, admit his sins, renounce his pact with Lucifer, and ask forgiveness and mercy from God. He stubbornly has traveled a highway to damnation, all the while seeking an unmarked off-ramp, an escape route, rather than taking the clearly marked road to salvation.

**Epilogue**

**Summary**

The chorus confirms that Faustus is in hell. Like the branch of tree that has grown twisted and unhealthy, his twisted, unhealthy life has been cut off. His chance for great achievements and immortality has been destroyed. The chorus warns that, while it may be interesting to consider the life path Faustus chose, the wise will understand it is dangerous to follow in his footsteps.

**Analysis**

While assuring the audience Faustus is in hell, the chorus sums up all he has lost in the line "And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough." The Greek god Apollo is associated with knowledge, art, poetry, and oracles. In ancient times a wreath of laurel, which was Apollo's symbolic tree, was awarded to victors in athletic competitions and poetry contests. The laurel is also associated with eternity or immortality, as the leaves never wilt. While Faustus might have enjoyed triumph and immortality through fame, this has been destroyed by his twisted ambitions, which have led him to the burning fires of hell.

Though the chorus blames Faustus for his "hellish fall" and "fiendful fortune," it also expresses sympathy for the man whose potential for greatness was never realized. He is "the branch that might have grown full straight." The final line suggests that Faustus was punished by God for practicing "more than heavenly power permits." This echoes the prologue, in which the chorus states that, like Daedalus and his son Icarus, the doctor "did mount above his reach" and the "heavens conspired his overthrow." In other words Faustus is doomed from the start for seeking "unlawful things." His life serves as a warning to seek knowledge carefully and be wary of the pitfalls of pride and ambition