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# **Dr .Faustus / Drama**

## **Second Stage**

**Summary: Scene 4 -7**

**By**

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# **Doctor Faustus**

**Christopher Marlowe**

## **Summary: Scene 4**

The final scenes contain some of the most noteworthy speeches in the play, especially Faustus's speech to Helen and his final soliloquy. His address to Helen begins with the famous line "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships," referring to the Trojan War, which was fought over Helen, and goes on to list all the great things that Faustus would do to win her love. He compares himself to the heroes of Greek mythology, who went to war for her hand, and he ends with a lengthy praise of her beauty. In its flowery language and emotional power, the speech marks a return to the eloquence that marks Faustus's words in earlier scenes, before his language and behavior become mediocre and petty. Having squandered his powers in pranks and childish entertainments, Faustus regains his eloquence and tragic grandeur in the final scene, as his doom approaches. Still, as impressive as this speech is, Faustus maintains the same blind spots that lead him down his dark road in the first place. Earlier, he seeks transcendence through magic instead of religion. Now, he seeks it through sex and female beauty, as he asks Helen to make him "immortal" by kissing him.

Moreover, it is not even clear that Helen is real, since Faustus's earlier conjuring of historical figures evokes only illusions and not physical beings. If Helen too is just an illusion, then Faustus is wasting his last hours dallying with a fantasy image, an apt symbol for his entire life. ([Faustus's speech concerning Helen of Troy](#))

### **Summary: Scene 5**

Faustus's final speech is the most emotionally powerful scene in the play, as his despairing mind rushes from idea to idea. One moment he is begging time to slow down, the next he is imploring Christ for mercy. One moment he is crying out in fear and trying to hide from the wrath of God, the next he is begging to have the eternity of hell lessened somehow. He curses his parents for giving birth to him but then owns up to his responsibility and curses himself. His mind's various attempts to escape his doom, then, lead inexorably to an understanding of his own guilt. ([Faustus's final speech](#))

The passion of the final speech points to the central question in *Doctor Faustus* of why Faustus does not repent. Early in the play, he deceives himself into believing either that hell is

not so bad or that it does not exist. But, by the close, with the gates of hell literally opening before him, he still ignores the warnings of his own conscience and of the old man, a physical embodiment of the conscience that plagues him. Faustus's loyalty to Lucifer could be explained by the fact that he is afraid of having his body torn apart by Mephistophilis. But he seems almost eager, even in the next-to-last scene, to reseal his vows in blood, and he even goes a step further when he demands that Mephistophilis punish the old man who urges him to repent. Marlowe suggests that Faustus's self-delusion persists even at the end. Having served Lucifer for so long, he has reached a point at which he cannot imagine breaking free.

In his final speech, Faustus is clearly wracked with remorse, yet he no longer seems to be able to repent. Christian doctrine holds that one can repent for any sin, however grave, up until the moment of death and be saved. Yet this principle does not seem to hold for Marlowe's protagonist. *Doctor Faustus* is a Christian tragedy, but the logic of the final scene is not Christian. Some critics have tried to deal with this problem by claiming that Faustus does not actually repent in

the final speech but that he only speaks wistfully about the possibility of repentance. Such an argument, however, is difficult to reconcile with lines such as:

O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down? . . . One drop of blood would save my soul, half a drop: ah my Christ

Faustus appears to be calling on Christ, seeking the precious drop of blood that will save his soul. Yet some unseen force—whether inside or outside him—prevents him from giving himself to God. ([The symbolism of blood throughout the play](#))

### **Summary: Scene 6**

Ultimately, the ending of *Doctor Faustus* represents a clash between Christianity, which holds that repentance and salvation are always possible, and the dictates of tragedy, in which some character flaw cannot be corrected, even by appealing to God. The idea of Christian tragedy, then, is paradoxical, as Christianity is ultimately uplifting. People may suffer—as Christ himself did—but for those who repent, salvation eventually awaits. To make *Doctor Faustus* a true tragedy, then, Marlowe had to set down a moment beyond which Faustus could no longer repent, so that in the final

scene, while still alive, he can be damned and conscious of his damnation.

The unhappy Faustus's last line returns us to the clash between Renaissance values and medieval values that dominates the early scenes and then recedes as Faustus pursues his mediocre amusements in later scenes. His cry, as he pleads for salvation, that he will burn his books suggests, for the first time since early scenes, that his pact with Lucifer is primarily about a thirst for limitless knowledge—a thirst that is presented as incompatible with Christianity. Scholarship can be Christian, the play suggests, but only within limits. As the Chorus says in its final speech:

**Faustus is gone! Regard his hellish fall, Whose fiendful  
fortune may exhort the wise Only to wonder at unlawful  
things: Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits To  
practice more than heavenly power permits.**

### **Summary: Scene 7**

In the duel between Christendom and the rising modern spirit, Marlowe's play seems to come down squarely on the side of Christianity. Yet Marlowe, himself notoriously accused of atheism and various other sins, may have had

other ideas, and he made his Faustus sympathetic, if not necessarily admirable. While his play shows how the untrammelled pursuit of knowledge and power can be corrupting, it also shows the grandeur of such a quest. Faustus is damned, but the gates that he opens remain standing wide, waiting for others to follow.