

## **Analysis of Doctor Faustus' Final Soliloquy**

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**Course:** ENGL 231

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**Essay Type:** Literary Analysis

Doctor Faustus' final soliloquy takes place during his last hour to live before his deal with the devil expires and he is carried off to spend eternity in hell. At this point, he has turned down every opportunity to repent of his sins and call on God to save him from eternal damnation. Faustus spends his last hour in wishful thoughts of ways to escape his impending doom. There is no repentance, though, and in the end, he is carried off to hell to spend eternity separated from God.

Faustus' soliloquy begins as the clock strikes eleven, pronouncing to Faustus that he has only one hour before his eternal punishment begins. Faustus knows his fate is at hand and begins his soliloquy by wishing that time would stand still so that midnight would never come or that the sun, "Fair Nature's eye," would rise again and make the day everlasting (XIII, 62). Faustus then moves from wishing that midnight wouldn't come altogether to merely wishing that his last hour would be stretched out to "A year, a month, a week, a natural day/ That Faustus may repent and save his soul" (XIII, 64-65). He spends his last hour wishing for more time to repent instead of using the time he already has to repent.

After giving up on the notion of obtaining more time, he then decides that he will look to God and acknowledges that one drop of Christ's blood can save him. Instead of calling on God to save him, though, he turns his attention back to the devil by pleading to him that he does not harm him for naming Christ and ends up calling for Lucifer to spare him instead of God. He then

concludes that God is too angry with him to save him. Faustus talks himself right out of repentance.

After his failed attempt at repentance, Faustus, in despair, calls for the mountains to fall on him and wishes for the earth to swallow him up. But then, concluding that the earth won't hide him, he turns his attention to the heavens:

You stars that reigned at my nativity  
Whose influence hath allotted death and hell  
Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist  
Into the entrails of yon laboring cloud  
That when you vomit forth into the air  
My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths  
So that my soul may but ascend to heaven. (XIII 81-87)

What Faustus means by this is that he wishes to be taken up and hidden in a cloud where he would be compressed into a thunderstorm, which would purify his soul and make it possible for him to enter heaven. Before Faustus can continue, though, the clock chimes the half hour causing him to shift his train of thought.

Now, instead of pleading for more time before his demise, he wishes for a time limit on his suffering. He pleads to God requesting that, after spending a thousand or even a hundred thousand years in hell, he might be saved from his misery. But, alas, Faustus is forced to acknowledge the reality that "no end is limited to damned souls" (XIII, 94). Faustus then wishes that he would become like an animal that had no soul, so that when he dies he would go to neither heaven nor hell, but merely return to the dust of the earth. Faustus concludes his soliloquy by recognizing the fact that he is still a creature with a soul and is doomed to spend

eternity in hell. He then curses his parents for having him, but quickly takes it back and decides to curse himself and Lucifer, who "hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven" (XIII 105). The clock then strikes midnight and Faustus calls his body to be turned into air or drops of water that are forever lost in the ocean never to be found. This is, of course, to no effect and Faustus is carried off to eternal torment.

Faustus spends his final hour in vain hopes that he may be spared from his fate. He looks inward for an escape when all he really needs to do is look upward. Lucifer does not send Faustus to hell, Faustus sends himself by not accepting the gift of salvation that God freely offers him right up until the end. In his final hour, Faustus comes to the realization that he is getting the short end of the deal he has made with the devil and how even all the power he had possessed is fleeting in the face of eternity. Faustus' final soliloquy is a realistic look inside the mind of someone who stands on the threshold of forever and knows his destination. After reading this, one should either rejoice that he or she will not have to face the same fate as Faustus, or recognize that he or she is walking the same road and repent.

*Ronald Aaron Palmer is a Liberal Arts major. Carole Bedwell was his instructor.*

**The Editor's Comments:** *This is a good example of close analysis. The writer pays attention not only to what the character says, but also to his actions, or non-action, to make his conclusions about the character of Dr. Faustus.*