Faustus as Dramatic Character

When we first meet Faustus, he is a man who is dissatisfied with his studies in dialectics, law, medicine, and divinity. Even though he is the most brilliant scholar in the world, his studies have not brought him satisfaction, and he is depressed about the limitations of human knowledge. In order to satisfy his thirst for greater knowledge, he decides to experiment in necromancy. He wants to transcend the bonds of normal human life and discover the heights beyond. One might say that he wants to have godlike qualities.

Faustus is willing to sell his soul to the devil under the terms of a contract by which he will receive twenty-four years of service from Mephastophilis and, at the end of this time, will relinquish his soul to Lucifer. At first he is potentially a great man who desires to perform beneficial acts for humanity, but as a result of his willingness to exchange his soul for a few years of pleasure, he begins to sink toward destruction. He allows his powers to be reduced to performing nonsensical tricks and to satisfying his physical appetites.

At various times throughout the drama, Faustus does stop and consider his dilemma and comes to the verge of repentance. He often thinks about repentance, but he consciously remains aligned with Mephastophilis and Lucifer, and never takes the first steps to obtain forgiveness.

By the end of the drama, when he is waiting for his damnation, he rationalizes his refusal to turn to God. Throughout the drama, internal and external forces suggest that Faustus could have turned to God and could have been forgiven. In the final scene, the scholars want Faustus to make an attempt to seek the forgiveness of God, but Faustus rationalizes that he has lived against the dictates of God, and he makes no effort to invoke God's forgiveness until the appearance of the devils. By then, he can only scream out in agony and horror at his final fate.