

Mark 13:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

Analysis

Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved—the Greek *ei mē ekolobōsen kyrios tas hēmeras* (εἰ μὴ ἐκολόβωσεν κύριος τὰς ἡμέρας, 'unless the Lord shortened the days') indicates divine intervention limiting tribulation's duration. *Ou... esōthē pasa sarx* (οὐκ... ἐσώθη πᾶσα σὰρξ, 'no flesh should be saved') means no human would survive—universal extinction without God's mercy.

But for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days—God limits suffering because of His elect. The Greek *eklektous* (ἐκλεκτούς, 'elect/chosen') refers to those sovereignly chosen for salvation (Romans 8:29-33; Ephesians 1:4-5). God's purpose to save His people shapes history. This teaches divine sovereignty—history serves God's redemptive plan, not vice versa. God neither cruelly prolongs suffering nor allows His people's destruction. The elect's preservation demonstrates God's faithfulness to His covenant promises.

Historical Context

AD 70 siege lasted five months—long enough for horrific suffering, short enough that some survived. Had it continued years, complete annihilation might have occurred. Early Christians saw divine mercy in timing. Broader application: God has repeatedly limited judgment for His people's sake. Genesis flood saved Noah's family (8 people); Sodom's destruction spared Lot; Babylonian exile lasted 70

years, not forever; Antiochus' persecution ended after 3 years. Church history shows similar mercy—persecutions end, churches survive, remnants preserved. End-times tribulation, however severe, will be limited for elect's sake (Revelation 7:9-14 shows innumerable multitude from every nation). This isn't universalism—many perish—but God preserves His chosen. His sovereignty ensures history accomplishes redemptive purposes.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does God limiting tribulation 'for the elect's sake' teach about His sovereignty over history and commitment to His people?
2. How does God's shortening the days for the elect's preservation differ from universalism (all saved) or fatalism (elect saved regardless)?
3. How should Christians threatened by persecution or tribulation respond to this promise—what confidence does it provide?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	εἰ	μὴ	κύριος	ἐκολόβωσεν	τὰς	ἡμέρας	οὐκ
And	G1487	G3361	that the Lord	had shortened	G3588	the days	no
G2532			G2962	G2856		G2250	G3756
ἂν	ἐσώθη	πᾶσα	σὰρξ·	ἀλλὰ	διὰ	τοὺς	ἐκλεκτοὺς
should be	saved	G3956	flesh	but	for	G3588	the elect's sake
G302	G4982		G4561	G235	G1223		G1588
οὓς	ἐξελέξατο	ἐκολόβωσεν	τὰς	ἡμέρας			
whom	he hath chosen	had shortened	G3588	the days			
G3739	G1586	G2856		G2250			

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 24:22 (Salvation): And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.
