

Romans 16:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

Analysis

Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us—The name Μαριάμ (Mariam) is the Hebrew form, suggesting Jewish heritage, though the variant Μαρία (Maria) was common among Greeks. The verb ἐκοπίασεν (ekopiasen, 'bestowed labour') is aorist tense, pointing to specific past service, and derives from κόπος (kopos)—exhausting toil, not casual help. Paul uses this term elsewhere for apostolic ministry (1 Corinthians 15:10, Galatians 4:11, Philippians 2:16), elevating Mary's work to the same category as his own.

The phrase **εἰς ὑμᾶς** (eis hymas, 'on us/for you') could mean either Mary labored for Paul's team or for the Roman church—manuscripts vary between 'us' and 'you.' Either way, she's commended for gospel service, not generic 'women's ministry.' Paul names 10 women in Romans 16, six explicitly praised for ministry labor—demolishing the notion that women were passive in early church leadership. Mary's unspecified labor likely included evangelism, discipleship, hospitality, or teaching, roles Paul consistently affirms for women coworkers (Romans 16:1 Phoebe; 16:3 Priscilla; 16:7 Junia).

Historical Context

Romans 16 lists 26 people by name, with greetings to at least 10 house churches in Rome (vv. 5, 10, 11, 14, 15). This was written before Paul visited Rome (AD 57), suggesting he had extensive networks through travel and mutual contacts. Mary's Jewish name and her labor 'among you' suggests she was an early believer in Rome's synagogue-based Christian community, perhaps involved in the risky work

of integrating Gentile converts into Jewish-Christian house churches during the Claudius expulsion aftermath (AD 49).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's commendation of Mary's 'labor' challenge restrictive views of women's ministry roles in the church?
2. What 'exhausting toil' for the gospel might go unrecognized in your church community, and how can you honor those who serve sacrificially?
3. How does Romans 16's extensive list of women in ministry inform your theology of gender roles in church leadership?

Interlinear Text

ἀσπάσασθε Μαρίαμ, ἣτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν εἰς ἡμᾶς

Greet	Mary	who	much	bestowed	on	us
G782	G3137	G3748	G4183	G2872	G1519	G2248

Additional Cross-References

Romans 16:12 (Parallel theme): Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.
